

TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF AUTOMATIC MARXISM :
THE POLITICS OF PHILOSOPHY FROM LUKACS TO THE
FRANKFURT SCHOOL

by

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An intellectual history of certain concepts within Marxism is even more suspect than an intellectual history of concepts of a non-Marxist tradition; for evidently a method that abstracts concepts from their socio-political context is repudiated by Marxists in advance. And yet to simply reduce the concepts to the economic and political reality in which they are located would confess to a vulgar materialism that is here under question; such a materialism renders ideas mindless inasmuch as they are mechanically fabricated by a witless reality. Consequently if theoretical disputes about the relation of the Marxist dialectic to nature, consciousness to Marxism, or Engels to Marx were also political disputes in the context of the 1920's, this is both relevant and irrelevant: relevant in that it indicates a political-social 'background' that enters the concepts themselves – a background that is also a foreground – and irrelevant in that the concepts and questions are not exhausted by this particular reality, but retain a meaning that transcends it. In brief: the texts are not to be reduced to the context nor absolutely severed from it.

The political configuration which was also a philosophical one was shaped by the failure of the II International in the face of World War I. This failure, due more to internal rot than lack of external power, necessitated a re-interpretation of Marxism itself, or more particularly of some of its main constituents, such as Kautsky, German Social Democracy, the later Engels, etc. For European or 'western' Marxism the crucial philosophical re-interpretations were Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* and G. Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. As both appeared in 1923, after the post World War I revolutionary surge had subsided, they would seem to have confirmed Hegel's dictum that thought appears "too late" after the actuality is already "cut and dried." But these were not merely grey critical summaries of past experiences, they were simultaneously critiques of present ones. As such they possessed a contemporary political dimension which by the very philosophical intensity of the works was ambiguous; and more exactly: ambiguous not out of timidity, but because the philosophical content of the works threatened to pass beyond the particular political practices they were apparently defending – the Bolshevik ones – and become a critique of these very same practices. This ambiguity bestowed on these works a political meaning that is yet to be drained.

Here it cannot be a question of the impossible task of summarizing these books, but only through Korsch – the simpler of the two – indicating the

direction of their thought.¹ Korsch questioned whether “the neglect of the problem of philosophy by the Marxists of the Second International “was related to the fact that the *problems of revolution in general hardly concerned them.*”² For Korsch, the Marxists of the “second generation” had transformed the “materialistic dialectic” into either a principle for “specialized scientific research” or into sociology. In both cases “the unified entirety” of Marxism was dissolved. Specifically the Marxists, exactly like the bourgeois thinkers, considered the philosophical content of Marxism to be nil. Korsch quoted Franz Mehring of the German Social Democrats who declared “the rejection of all philosophical fantasies.” This repudiation of all philosophy rested on a non-dialectical interpretation of Marx’s sentence “philosophy cannot be abolished [*nicht aufheben*] without being realized [*verwirklichen*].”³ Rather than labeling all forms of consciousness as ideology and then ignoring them, Marx formulated *critiques* which were at once a critique of the relations of production as well as “particular social forms of consciousness.”⁴ The vulgar Marxists, under the influence of positivism and natural sciences, ignored the dialectical relation of consciousness and society, and consequently adulterated Marxism to social reformism. Integral to the reality of bourgeois society is its “*geistige Struktur*”, and hence integral to the revolutionary process is “*geistige Aktion*.”⁵ To ignore these moments was to ignore the kernel of Marxism; it was to leave the proletariat imprisoned within bourgeois modes of thought so that even with an economic crisis revolution was precluded, as only bourgeois alternatives were conscious. Why is the proletariat not revolutionary, asked Lukács in an essay from 1920; because “in the midst of the deadly crisis of capitalism broad masses of the proletariat still experience the bourgeois state, laws and economy as the only possible environment of existence.”⁶

While the work of Korsch and Lukács stood ostensibly in defense of the prevailing orthodoxy of the III International, it was condemned by the Bolsheviks at the Fifth Congress of the International (June-July 1924); their theoretical and philosophical efforts were there directly linked to a political

1. Korsch in a postscript to the original publication stated the “basic accord” “based on a broad philosophical foundation” between Lukács’ book and his own work. This however was partially revoked in the 1930 long preface to the republication of his essay; “. . . I was not sufficiently aware at the time of the extent to which Lukács and I, despite our many theoretical similarities, did in fact diverge . . .” K. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy* (London, 1970), p. 91-92.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 68 and K. Korsch *Marxismus und Philosophie* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1966), p. 116.

4. A fuller discussion of the notion of “critique” in Marxism can be found in a small book from the previous year by Korsch; *Kernpunkte der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung* (Berlin, 1922).

5. Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie*, p. 135-6; *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 84-5.

6. Cited in P. Ludz, “Der Begriff der ‘demokratischen Diktatur’ in der politischen Philosophie von Georg Lukács,” in *Festschrift zum achtzigsten Geburtstag von G. Lukács*, hrsg. F. Benseler (Neuwied und Berlin, 1965), p. 49.

error of 'left' communism; as Zinoviev explained, "all the world knows that the tactics of the Communist International, the tactics of Bolshevism and Leninism were formed principally against Social Democracy, against the right, against the center. But what is less known is that Bolshevism has had to struggle against other deviations, that one has often qualified as 'left' or 'extreme-left.'"⁷

While Lukács and Korsch barely broached any direct criticism of the Comintern policies,⁸ their works were nevertheless read as justifications of 'left' communism. Their work, however, is not linked to the 'left' communists by a single formula; it varies with the philosophical and political dimension. For this relationship to be drawn out, the 'leftists' must be located within or against the forces that determine the Russian Revolution: the failure of the European revolution and the subsequent Bolshevization of the International. The 'left' communists, while possessing a history that predated the Russian Revolution, resisted this Bolshevization at once politically and philosophically. Within this resistance or effort to found a communist movement distinct from the Russian model, both philosophical and political analogies to Lukács and Korsch can be found.

Only several points on the Russian situation can be permitted here. The period between the Second and the Third Congresses of the International (Summer 1920 and Summer 1921) was a decisive period in the Bolshevization of the Communist International. Between these two dates the revolutionary drive in Europe seemed to decline. Trotsky said at the Third Congress: "In a word, the situation now at the time of the Third Congress of the Communist International is not the same as at the time of the First and the Second Congresses. . . Now for the first time we see and feel that we are not so immediately near to the goal, to the conquest of power, to the world revolution. At that time, in 1919, we said to ourselves, 'It is a question of months.' Now we say 'It is perhaps a question of years.'"⁹ This ebb in the

7. *V Congrès de l'Internationale Communiste* (Paris, 1924; Feltrinelli reprint, 1967), p. 19; 24-5.

8. To be noted is that an essay of Korsch's published on the eve of the Fifth Congress, "Lenin und die Komintern," *Internationale*, 7 (1924), p. 320f., did subtly criticize Comintern politics. E. H. Carr has remarked that this "powerful article seems to have caused some stir in Moscow" as it denounced "by implication" current Comintern pragmatism. E. H. Carr, *Socialism in One Contry 1924-26*, vol. III, pt. I and II (New York, 1964), p. 110-111. See also Korsch's article from the same month "Ueber materialistische Dialektik," reprinted in *Marxismus und Philosophie*, p. 171f, that similarly takes to task Thalheimer. To be mentioned also is Lukács critique of Comintern policy via his critique of Béla Kun; see "Preface to New Edition" (1967) *History and Class Consciousness* (London, 1971), p. xvf. and Lukács' "Noch einmal Illusionspolitik" (1922) in Lukács, *Frühschriften II* (Neuwied und Berlin, 1968), p. 155f.

9. Cited in W. Angress, *Stillborn Revolution* (Princeton, N.J., 1963), p. 187. For some details of this period see, besides Angress, H. Gruber, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin: A Documentary History* (Greenwich, Conn., 1967), p. 217f. E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 3* (Baltimore, Md., 1966), p. 170f. A. Rosenberg, *A History of Bolshevism* (Garden City, N.Y., 1967), p. 143f.

world revolutionary movement was lethal to the Russian Revolution; it dictated a critical twist in Bolshevik policy from pursuing world revolution to gaining a “respite” from the forces that threatened to undo its own revolution. Lenin’s last article, “Better Fewer, but Better” (1923) stated: “. . . but what interests us is not the inevitability of this complete victory of socialism, but the tactics which we the Russian Communist Party, we the Russian Soviet Government should pursue to prevent the west European counter-revolutionary states from crushing us.”¹⁰

The principles which formed the mainstay of the Bolshevization – the subordination of the non-Russian parties to the interests and needs of the Russian party and state – were announced already at the Second Congress; the change in the world revolutionary situation, however, had transformed them into serving not, as intended, the international revolution, but the more immediate interests of Russia, now pursuing the consolidation of an endangered revolution. Of particular importance here are the “21 Conditions” and Lenin’s pamphlet *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*. The “21 Conditions” itemized conditions that national parties were to accept if they were to become members of the III International. They sought to found an organization in direct opposition to the ineffective II International; hence they emphasized the necessity for binding decisions and centralism. “The Communist International operating in the midst of a most acute civil war must have a far more centralized form of organization than that of the II International,” read part of the “21 Conditions.”¹¹ Yet its final result, though not necessarily its intent, was the Bolshevization of the Communist International. Lenin’s pamphlet offered direction and content for this Bolshevization, though this again was not necessarily its purpose. It repudiated ‘leftists’ who saw it as a matter of *principle* that communists refuse to participate in trade unions and parliaments. To Lenin, this position was erroneous. “To reject compromise ‘on principle’ . . . is childishness.”¹² Rather these were *tactical* questions and participation in these institutions was never to be rejected *a priori*. As E.H. Carr has noted, Lenin’s critique of the ‘leftists’ was founded on “the assumption of a close and unassailable” analogy between the past (successful) tactics of the Russian Revolution and those of western Europe.¹³ It supposed an identity of conditions between Russia and west Europe and hence an identical model of theory and practice.

The ‘left’ communist response as presented by a leading Dutch leftist, Herman Gorter, assailed this very assumed identity.¹⁴ Gorter’s “Open Letter”

10. *Lenin’s Last Letters and Articles* (Moscow, n.d.), p. 58. See for a discussion of this piece, M. Lewin, *Lenin’s Last Struggle* (New York, 1970), p. 105f.

11. “Conditions of Admission into the Communist International,” in Gruber, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin*, p. 291.

12. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder* (Peking, 1965), p. 23.

13. E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 3*, p. 184.

14. It should be mentioned, however, that Lenin’s famous pamphlet is not merely an argument for identical theory and praxis of Russia and western Europe. While he could write that “the general plan of the present pamphlet” “is

to Lenin argued that the west European proletariat differed in its socio-economic situation from the Russian; in west Europe it had to depend on its own forces because it could not find aid in a peasantry. Further, the west European proletariat stood in a different relation to bourgeois culture and ideology than the Russian. "Here the bourgeois ideology has overpowered the whole social and hence political life; it has penetrated much more deeply into the hearts and minds of the proletariat."¹⁵ As a result tactics that make use of parliament and trade unions endangered the west European proletariat more than the Russian, as the former was already so much the more prey to bourgeois methods and thoughts. Rather the tactics should be orientated in the reverse direction: to weaken bourgeois habits and tendencies. "The problem of tactics is how the traditional bourgeois modes of thought are to be outrooted – their power crippled – from the proletariat masses."¹⁶

It is here where an inner link is established between those who were openly acknowledged as leftists and those like Korsch and Lukács who were not; the Dutch leftists were implicitly and explicitly formulating a critique of Marxism that ignored its own philosophical and conscious content. Questioned was a Marxism that neglected the impact of bourgeois thought and culture on the consciousness of the proletariat; the category of *Geist* here as with Korsch and Lukács moved to the fore. Towards the end of his "letter" Gorter took note of the argument that even with parliamentary tactics and bad trade unions an economic crisis would by itself drive the masses to communism; yet, he observed, the economic crisis had already come to Germany, Hungary, and Austria, and the revolution was not victorious. "The most fearsome economic crisis is there – and the revolution however does not come. There must be still another cause which brings about a revolution; and when it is not operative, the revolution fails to appear or misfires. This cause is the *Geist* of the masses."¹⁷ Gorter concluded that the III International "neglects the *geistige* development of the proletariat – which still in every sphere lives securely under the spell of bourgeois ideology – and chooses a tactic which permits

to apply to Western Europe whatever is of general application, general validity and generally binding force in the history and present tactics of Bolshevism," (*Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, p. 36) this is intended in a dialectical sense; what Lenin values in the Bolsheviks is their analysis of the concrete *specific* conditions, which, according to Lenin, the 'leftists' replace with dogma and abstractions. He is not simply advocating an uncritical adoption of Bolshevik tactics; hence he could write also with no contradiction, "we must clearly realize that such a leading center [a new International] cannot under any circumstances be built up on stereotyped mechanically equalized and identical tactical rules of struggle." (*Ibid.*, p. 95.) To what extent the Bolsheviks presented as a positivist model vies with them as a dialectical model forms the inner tension of Lenin's pamphlet.

15. H. Gorter, "Offener Brief an den Genossen Lenin, . . ." in A. Pannekoek, H. Gorter, *Organisation und Taktik der Proletarischen Revolution*, hrsg. H. Bock (Frankfurt a/Main, 1969), p. 192.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

slavery and subjugation to the ideas of the bourgeoisie to persist." The left, on the other hand, "chosses its tactics, so that in the first place the *Geist* of the proletariat will be pushed forward." Since the west European proletariat must make the revolution by itself, it must be "*geistig und seelisch*" highly developed.¹⁸

That this was no momentary interest in the problem of *Geist* in Marxism, but was rather embedded in their politics is evidenced by the other writings of the Dutch school. As Hans Boch has noted, Gorter in 1907 was arguing "the *Geist* must be revolutionized . . . *geistige* propaganda, that is the all-important the all-necessary. . ." ¹⁹ During the pre-World War I years Gorter and Anton Pannekoek, the other leading Dutch leftist, were maintaining against Kautsky, et. al., the importance of consciousness in the working classes. The question that Pannekoek posed in 1912 before the revolutionary surge in Germany was exactly the same as Gorter posed afterward – and that in different terms both Korsch and Lukács formulated. "Why has the working class still not been able to conquer power despite its numerical and economic superiority to the bourgeoisie?" One of the answers was "the *geistige superiority* of the ruling minority; as a class which lives from surplus value and has in its hands control over production, it disposes over all *geistige* development, all science. . . Through the schools, the church, the bourgeois press, it contaminates ever larger proletariat masses with bourgeois conceptions. . . . The *geistige* dependence of the proletariat on the bourgeoisie is the main cause of the weakness of the proletariat."²⁰

Another essay of Pannekoek's from 1912, also directed against Kautsky, placed in relief the non-mechanistic components of the proletarian organization simply as a "*Machtmitteln*;" yet central is the "*Organisationsgeist*" that binds the proletariat together into a real solidarity, a real humanity. The essence of the proletarian organization was to be found not in its statutes, rights, and duties, but in the "*Organisationsgeists* of the proletariat, in the deep transformation of character." To forget this, as Kautsky did, was to forget what distinguishes the proletarian organization from any other organization.²¹ Further, Pannekoek stated that Marxism does not exclude *Geist* and will, but is a combination of historical-economic and "activity of *Geist*" teachings. If the accent of the former is on necessary conditions, that of the latter is on the non-fatalistic components, on the "philosophical side of Marxism."²²

In an essay from 1916 on imperialism and the task of the proletariat,

18. *Ibid.*, p. 226-7.

19. Cited in and see H. Bock's fine essay, "Zur Geschichte und Theorie der Holländischen Marxistischen Schule," in Pannekoek, Gorter, *Organisation und Taktik der proletarischen Revolution*, p. 14.

20. A. Pannekoek, "Massenaktion und Revolution," in *Die Massenstreikdebatte*, hrsg. A. Grunenberg (Frankfurt a/Main, 1970), p. 266.

21. A. Pannekoek, "Marxistische Theorie und revolutionäre Taktik," in Pannekoek, Gorter, *Organisation und Taktik*, p. 55-7.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 66-9.

Pannekoek rejected the notion that the proletariat capitulated before the war solely because it was too weak; the point was not that German Social Democracy was too weak, but that the party "*im innern*" was incapable of struggling; the weakness was not that of a material force but a "lack of *geistige* force, a lack of will for class struggle."²³ Pannekoek's "World Revolution and Communist Tactics" (1920) restated the case: in November 1918 the state was powerless and the workers for a moment were masters; yet victory eluded them while the bourgeoisie recaptured control. "That proves that still another secret source of power of the bourgeoisie existed which was untouched and which permitted them. . . to newly construct their domination. This secret power is the *geistige* power of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat. Because the proletariat masses were still wholly ruled by a bourgeois mode of thought, after the collapse they rebuilt with their own hands bourgeois domination."²⁴

Not to be forgotten is that these citations are taken out of context; the emphasis in the Dutch school on consciousness, on the ideological subjugation of the working class was not abstract, but possessed a specific political content; it was directed against a prevailing orthodoxy – against Kautsky's fetish of organization or his "actionless waiting" which would "let the great mass actions occur passively like a natural event:"²⁵ or against an elite/mass dualism, or against the Leninist policy of working with trade unions and parliaments. Hence when *Kommunismus*, "The most important Central European forum of debate within the Third International,"²⁶ and one of whose regular contributors was Lukács, published a Pannekoek essay it was with the editorial note that while the essay was a worthwhile contribution it "might stand in a certain contradiction to the principles of the Moscow Executive Committee."²⁷

In fact Lukács himself – in the political dimension – stood in a certain "contradiction" to the Moscow policy; his analysis, like that of the Dutch leftists, showed extreme sensitivity to the danger of succumbing to bourgeois modes of thought and practices. To the Lukács of "*Taktik und Ethik*", not only parliamentary activity but the party of the proletariat itself was a concession to a bourgeois reality. The party expressed externally the inner contradiction that the "proletariat has become too strong to withdraw from political activity" but was "still not strong enough to be able to impose its

23. A. Pannekoek, "Der Imperialismus und die Aufgaben des Proletariats," in *Organisation und Taktik*, p. 88-9.

24. A. Pannekoek, "Weltrevolution und kommunistischen Taktik," in *Organisation und Taktik*, p. 131.

25. A. Pannekoek, "Massenaktion und Revolution," in *Die Massenstreikdebatte*, p. 284.

26. P. Breines, "Introduction to Lukács," *Telos*, 5 (Spring, 1970), p. 1. Lukács has called *Kommunismus* a "focal point for the ultra-left currents in the Third International," "Preface to New Edition" (1967), *History and Class Consciousness*, p. xiii.

27. Cited in H. Bock, "Zur Geschichte und Theorie . . ." in *Organisation und Taktik*, p. 29.

will and interests on society.” As a result “the party of the proletariat was forced to acknowledge the forms of capitalist society. It criticizes these forms in vain – in word and deed – while it participates in elections, in parliamentary life, etc. It has in fact admitted capitalist society.”²⁸

An analysis of the same bent was Lukács’ on the question of participation in parliaments in “On the Question of Parliamentarism;” on this issue which divided the leftists and Lenin, Lukács tended to follow the leftists. Parliamentarianism was not, as the Leninists would have it, simply a question of tactics. Parliament was the “primal instrument of the bourgeoisie.” “Every struggle that remains restricted to parliament is a tactical victory for the bourgeoisie.” Hence it could never be the real battleground for the proletariat, but only an “*Ersatz*” for it; at best it could only be a “defensive weapon” when the revolution was unthinkable “in the foreseeable time.”²⁹ Lenin found Lukács essay “very left-wing and very poor. Its Marxism is purely verbal. . . it takes no account of what is most essential (the need to take over and to learn to take over, all fields of work and all institutions in which the bourgeoisie exerts its influence over the masses, etc.)”³⁰

As with the Dutch leftists the philosophical content is not tacked onto Lukács’ work but inheres to the political analysis. The critique of bourgeois modes of political praxis passes into an analysis that centers on bourgeois modes of thought that sustain this praxis. An article from the following year, “Organizational Questions of Revolutionary Initiative,” an analysis of the German “March Action” – the call for an offensive action by the German Communist Party that ended in defeat – illustrates the convergence of the political and the philosophical. Lukács’ critique of the action was not that it failed – this was always a possibility – but that the propaganda during the action was the same as before the action; what was manifested was a specific form of *unconsciousness*. The “*propaganda apparatus functioned to a certain extent automatically, by ‘itself’ . . .*” Lacking was the “*geistig* organizational principle.” It was not enough to create “iron revolutionary discipline” but at the same time it was necessary “*to call into being, in the structure of the party, the geistige and organizational pre-requisites for such a discipline . . .*” For the centralization of the revolutionary party cannot be executed in a “bureaucratic-technical manner.” It depends as much on “the clear consciousness of the members of the party.” As such it is ultimately a “*geistige* question.” “The obstacles,” wrote Lukács, “which are to be overcome are of a *geistiger* type – the ideological remains of capitalist reification in the thought and sensibilities of the communist himself; bureaucratic routine, individualism . . .”³¹

28. G. Lukács, *Taktik und Ethik*, reprinted in *Wissenschaftlichen Intelligenz, Schulung, Organisationsfrage* (Rotes Presse-Syndikat, n.p., n.d.), p. 33f. For the democratic accent of Lukács’ political thought – its anti-bureaucratic anti-party bent – see the essay by P. Ludz cited above, footnote no. 6.

29. G. Lukács, “Zur Frage des Parlamentarismus,” *Kommunismus*, I/6 (1920) reprinted in Lukács, *Organisation und Partei* (n.p., n.d.) p. 164f.

30. Lenin, “Kommunismus,” *Collected Works*, vol. 31 (Moscow, 1966), p. 165.

31. G. Lukács, “Organisatorische Fragen der revolutionären Initiative,” in

An essay from "*Taktik und Ethik*", on intellectual leaders and intellectual 'workers', contained the germ of *History and Class Consciousness* and of the Frankfurt School's conception of the relation of consciousness to history and nature. Here Lukács developed the notion that Marxism makes society conscious of its own development; it is the "*Bewusstmachung der Entwicklung der Gesellschaft*." Only the "shallowness and philosophical crudeness" of Marx's successors have obscured that Marx had retained this notion from Hegel, i.e., that development in society is the movement from unconsciousness to self-consciousness, from "*völliger Bewusstlosigkeit bis zum klaren Sichbewusstwerden*." The vulgar Marxists, "since they did not understand the historical interpretation of Hegel's, rendered development a process that was completely automatic – not only independent of consciousness, but qualitatively distinct from it." Marxism is not, as the vulgar Marxists would have it, the mere substitution of materialism for idealism, but rather is the "*deepening*" of the Hegelian system. Lukács noted here, and this would be picked up later, that unlike Hegel "the careful profundity of Marx prevented him from applying this method to investigations of nature." He "sought and found them in the process of the *unified development of society*" and its self-seeking and finally self-finding consciousness, the "*sich selbst suchende und sich endlich findende Bewusstsein*."³²

II

It was with the publication of *History and Class Consciousness* and its critical response that the philosophical questions connected loosely with left communism were most fully aired; up for discussion were not the tactics of parliamentary participation or trade unions, but that of *Geist* or consciousness in the Marxist dialectic; the political dimension receded as did the chance for revolution. As Korsch noted later, "this philosophical discussion was only the weak echo of the political and tactical disputes that the two sides [western Marxism and Russian communism] had conducted so fiercely some years before."³³ At the kernel of the debate was the problem of the subject-object relation in Marxism, or stated differently, of the relation of the dialectic to history and nature. To Lukács and others the application of the Marxist dialectic indifferently or equally to history and nature lost what was unique to the Marxist dialectic: the subject-object relationship which was unknown in nature. The exponents of a dialectic of nature tended to eliminate the very subjectivity and consciousness that Lukács and Korsch were trying to restore to Marxism; rather taking the natural sciences as a model they posited an 'automatic'

Wissenschaftlichen Intelligenz. For a discussion of the politics of the analyses of the March Action see Angress, *Stillborn Revolution*, esp. p. 167f. Cf. R. Schlesinger, "Historical Setting of Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*," in *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*, ed. I. Mészáros (London, 1971), p. 192f.

32. G. Lukács, *Taktik und Ethik*, in *Wissenschaftlichen Intelligenz*, p. 16-17.

33. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 106.

development – an unconscious subjectless one – for society itself. Inevitably the discussion centered on Engels who more than Marx elaborated a dialectic of nature.

In the first pages of *History and Class Consciousness* Lukács noted that Engels' exposition of the dialectic lacked the vital element: "the dialectical relation between subject and object in the historical process."³⁴ And he added in a footnote that "the misunderstandings that arise from Engels' account of dialectics can in the main be put down to the fact that Engels – following Hegel's mistaken lead – extended the method to apply also to nature. However the crucial determinants of dialectics – the interaction of subject and object . . . are absent from our knowledge of nature."³⁵ Further in the text Lukács would return in passing to this same point. Engels confused scientific experiments with dialectical praxis; yet the former lacked the subjective moment without which human praxis is meaningless. "In fact, scientific experiment is contemplation at its purest. The experimenter creates an artificial, abstract milieu in order to observe undisturbed the untrammelled workings of the laws under examination."³⁶

The philosophical and theoretical reaction to *History and Class Consciousness* was intense. Not long after its publication two extensive rebuttals appeared; one by the then leader of Soviet philosophy A. Deborin, and one by a former comrade of Lukács, L. Rudas; together they accounted for some 100 pages of response. These were part of the anti-Lukács onslaught. As M. Watnick has noted, "doctrinal disputes among Communists have seldom shown much regard for the amenities, but the campaign against Lukács nevertheless established something of a record for calculated ferocity . . . The stock criticisms of the book . . . were echoed and re-echoed . . . until Lukácsism became a term of abuse in party vocabulary."³⁷

Both Deborin and Rudas repudiated Lukács' analysis of the relationship of the dialectic to nature; both defended Engels; both accused Lukács of being an idealist and a Hegelian. Deborin, basing himself on Lenin, defended the position that "thought" reflects "being."³⁸ Accordingly Being cannot be divided into a natural and historical reality; it is of one piece, and the dialectic applies to it universally. "From the standpoint of dialectical materialism nature is in itself [*an sich*] dialectical."³⁹ Or as Deborin would write elsewhere, in "Materialistic

34. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 3.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

37. M. Watnick, "Relativism and Class Consciousness: G. Lukács," in *Revisionism*, ed. L. Labedz (New York, 1962), p. 145.

38. Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* was, and is, a favorite of the Soviet orthodoxy; yet his *Philosophical Notebooks* which were unpublished till the end of the 1920s contained a rather different presentation of the dialectic. For a discussion of the apparent and real contradiction between these works and their meaning to Lenin's political thought see P. Piccone, "Towards an Understanding of Lenin's Philosophy" and R. Jacoby, "Lenin and Luxemburg: Negation in Theory and Praxis," in *Radical America*, 6 (Sept.-Oct. 1970), IV.

39. A. Deborin, "Lukács und seine Kritik des Marxismus," *Arbeiterliteratur*

Dialectic and Natural Science”; “The form of the dialectic encompasses the whole of reality; since dialectics sets forth the general teaching of the laws of movement and the forms of movement of all being, so must also the natural sciences be penetrated by it.” “The dialectic of nature is the algebra of natural science.”⁴⁰

Rudas defended a similar position. “If the dialectic is confined to society, there exist two worlds, with two completely distinct sets of law: Nature and Society.” Inasmuch as the dialectic is restricted to society, and society is made by men, then the dialectic is a human creation; this would mean that “the dialectic is not an objective law, independent from men, but a subjective law of men.” This was “subjective idealism”; rather, he maintained, with Marx and Engels the dialectic is a “natural law.” “The dialectical law extends to all of reality, to society and nature . . .” As with Deborin the subject-object dialectic is muted for a causal relation which can be expressed as a “general law.” “Such a law is, for example, the Darwin law of development or the Marxist law of the dependence of the political and intellectual process of society on the productive process.”⁴¹

Only Rudas hinted at the latent political content of Lukács’ philosophical interpretation. He observed that others too have seen in Engels “the first vulgar Marxist.” He named in particular Arturo Labriola (not to be confused with Antonio Labriola); “and I mention Arturo Labriola exactly because he was a left radical (in the sense of Lenin’s infantile disorder!)”⁴² More on that was not said, though it would be by others later. J. Sten, an adherent of Deborin, wrote that one of Lukács’ essays “reveals with utter clarity the link between the philosophy of Lukács and a subjectivist direction, that is, with the left infantile disorder in politics.”⁴³

The Russian orthodoxy, in the process of being codified, thus suspected a transgression wherever a division between history and nature was broached. Such a division seemed to suggest that the laws of history were not as scientific as the laws of natural phenomena – that they were open to human change, tampering, and intervention. Rather the accent in Soviet Marxism was on human adjustment to the invariant nature of objective universal laws. “Marxism comprehends the law of science – exactly the same whether it is a question of the law of natural science or of political economy – as the reflection of an objective process, operating by itself, independent of the will of man. Men can discover these laws, they can research them . . . but they cannot change or annul them . . .” wrote

(1924), reprinted in *Lukacsdebatte*, hrsg. Marxismus-Kollektive (n.p., 1969), p. 103.

40. A. Deborin, “Materialistische Dialektik und Naturwissenschaft,” in A. Deborin, N. Bucharin, *Kontroversen über dialektischen und mechanistischen Materialismus*, Introduction by O. Negt, (Frankfurt a/Main, 1969) p. 97; 133.

41. L. Rudas, “Orthodox Marxism” “Die Klassenbewusstseinstheorie von Lukács” I, II, *Arbeiterliteratur*, (1924), reprinted in *Lukacsdebatte*, p. 20; 22; 40.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

43. Cited in I. Fetscher, “Der Verhältnis des Marxismus zu Hegel,” in *Marxismusstudien*, Dritte Folge (1960), p. 119-20.

Stalin.⁴⁴ If the laws were simply to be reflected, subjectivity decayed to passivity: it registered reality. The law identical in structure in history and nature circumscribed subjectivity; social action is patterned on technological models.

The question of laws – to what degree and how they exist in nature and history – is at the core of the philosophical problem, and is in turn inseparable from the question of the subject-object relation, the Engels' legacy, and the meaning of Malthus and Darwin in Marxism. As cited above, Rudas noted as examples of general dialectical laws discoveries of both Darwin and Marx. And he hardly was the first. At Marx's funeral Engels said "just as Darwin discovered the laws of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history . . ." ⁴⁵ The notion was current. The young Kautsky had written "the theory of history wishes to be nothing else than the application of Darwinism to social development."⁴⁶ Or as Bebel said, "What Darwin did for Nature, what he defined in relation to the laws that dominate the development of life, Marx did for human society."⁴⁷ And moreover the analogies had a basis in fact. Marx often wrote of the "natural laws" of capitalistic development, as in the preface to *Capital*. Both he and Engels were enthusiastic over the appearance of Darwin's book, and it is known that Marx was interested in dedicating an edition of *Capital* to Darwin.

With Engels the identification of the laws of history and nature proceeded at least in part to the transformation of the dialectic into a law universal in application, valid in history and nature, with its reflection the special province of philosophy. A water-tight subject-object division was a prerequisite for this interpretation; the objective inalterable and universal laws of nature and history were only to be summed up passively by the subject. Engels wrote in *Anti-Dühring* that the negation of the negation is a "law of development of Nature, history and thought: a law which holds good in the animal and plant kingdom, in geology, in mathematics, in history, and in philosophy . . . When I say that all these processes are the negation of the negation, I bring them all together under this one law of motion . . . Dialectics is nothing more than the science of the general law of motion and development of Nature, human society and thought."⁴⁸ Similar formulations could be found in his pamphlet on Feuerbach and in a number of other writings.⁴⁹

44. Cited by O. Negt, "Introduction," Deborin, Bucharin, *Kontroversen* . . . p. 43. Cf. J. Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (New York, 1940), p. 5-23.

45. F. Engels, "Karl Marx's Funeral," *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels* (Moscow, n.d.), p. 348.

46. Cited in E. Mathias, "Kautsky und der Kautskyanismus," *Marxismusstudien*, Zweite Folge (1957), p. 153.

47. Cited and see for other evidence A. von Weise, *Die Diskussion über den Historischen Materialismus in der Deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1891-1918* (Weisbaden, 1956), p. 125.

48. F. Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science (Anti-Dühring)* (New York, 1939), p. 155.

49. F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York, 1941), p. 59.

While these statements would seem to give substance to the Russian orthodoxy, others do not. Rather Marx and Engels developed a critique of laws that blur the distinction between history and nature. These freeze history into abstract laws that bar the conscious reconstruction of society inasmuch as they are deemed eternally valid. History is killed by subsuming it under the laws of nature. Marx wrote in a letter on F. Lange, a Kantian: "Herr Lange, you see, has made a great discovery. The whole of history can be brought under a single great natural law. This natural law is the *phrase* (in this application Darwin's expression becomes nothing but a phrase) 'the struggle for life' and the content of this phrase is the Malthusian law of population, or rather over-population. So instead of analyzing the struggle for life as represented historically in varying and definite forms of society all that has to be done is to translate every concrete struggle into the phrase 'struggle for life' . . ."50 Engels in a letter was no less certain. "The whole Darwinist teaching of the struggle for existence is simply the transference from society to living nature of Hobbes's doctrine of a 'war of all against all' and of the bourgeois economic doctrine of competition together with Malthus's theory of population. When this conjurer's trick has been performed the same theories are transferred back again from organic nature into history and it is now claimed that their validity as eternal laws of human society has been proved. The puerility of this procedure is so obvious that not a word need be said of it . . ."51

Two citations from *Capital* can illustrate a similar point. One is a footnote where Marx observed the lack of a "critical history of technology" and praised Darwin for his interest in "the history of Nature's technology, i.e. in the formation of the organs of plants and animals." Marx added "Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organization deserve equal attention? And would not such a history be easier to compile, since, as Vico says human history differs from natural history in that we have made the former, but not the latter?"52 The other citation is from Marx's continuing critique of Malthus: "every special historic mode of production has its own special law of population, historically valid within its limits alone. An abstract law of population exists for plants and animals only, and only insofar as man has not interfered with them [*soweit der Mensch nicht geschichtlich eingreift*]"53 Or as Marx wrote in the *Grundrisse*, Malthus "treated over-population in its various historical phases of development as identical; he did not understand their specific distinctions . . . he transformed a historical differentiated relationship into an abstract numerical one . . . In history one finds that population proceeds through different relationships and over-population is exactly a particular historical relationship."54

50. Marx, *Letters to Kugelmann* (New York, 1934), p. 111.

51. Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow, 1965), p. 301-3.

52. Marx, *Capital I* (Moscow, 1961), p. 372.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 632 and *Das Kapital I* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1969), p. 660.

54. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, n.d.), p. 449.

The Marx and Engels critique of Malthus and Darwin would seem to lend support to that of Lukács; a dialectic translated into an abstract and formal law is deprived of its historical content: invariant, it is apologetic, not critical. Korsch in a long critique of Kautsky's *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung* discussed Kautsky's transformation of the historical dialectic into a supra-historical natural law. Despite all talk of historical analysis, Kautsky's was "merely a new variant of that vulgar 'struggle for existence' philosophy which since the days of Hobbes, Malthus, and Darwin every sworn enemy of the conscious reconstruction of society has used in ever increasing measure as 'scientific support for their reactionary tendencies.'"⁵⁵

In the 1930 re-consideration of *Marxism and Philosophy*, Korsch noted the "complete identity" of the Social Democratic and Bolshevik critiques of his book.⁵⁶ Each suspected that Korsch's – and Lukács' – Marxism as subjective idealism deprived reality of its objective laws that were independent from the will of men. The philosophical convergence between what are otherwise deemed contrary Marxist trends, Social Democracy and Bolshevism, points to a political convergence; both were politically on the defensive – though each was defensive against something different: (German) Social Democracy at its height before World War I consolidating and waiting for revolution⁵⁷ and Bolshevism after the failure of the European revolution. In both cases, to follow Merleau-Ponty, himself following Korsch, the subject, as it were, dissociated from the object, because the realm of the object, ultimately the political economy, seemed to have stabilized. This jelling of the political and social situation lent itself to modes of thought that minimized human intervention and revolutionary praxis – to modes of thought nourished by the natural sciences and positivism. Technological reasoning replaced a social dialectic. If the social reality, wrote Merleau-Ponty, is rendered a natural reality "there only remains to govern it as

55. Korsch, "Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung," *Grünberg Archiv XIV* (1929), p. 216. It should be noted in passing that Lukács and Korsch were not without precedents in their critique of positivist deformations of Marxism. For example, one can find in the 1895 critique of Struve by Lenin, "The Economic Content of Narodism," the re-articulation of Marx's critique of Malthus; see Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. I (Moscow, 1963), p. 453-4. Of particular interest are the Italian predecessors that culminate in Gramsci. "There are . . . no reasons for carrying back that work of man that is history to the simple struggle for existence," wrote Antonio Labriola in 1896, *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History* (Chicago, 1908), p. 120. Barely acknowledged outside of Italy is the work of Rudolfo Mondolfo; see his full scale appraisal and critique of Engels from 1912, *Le Materialisme Historique d'après F. Engels* (Paris, 1917). This has been called "the first systematic investigation of the difference between Marx and Engels" that anticipates current discussions over their divergence. C. Ritchers, *Antonio Gramsci. Marxismus in Italien* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1970), p. 21.

56. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 90-1.

57. Out of the extensive literature see C. Shorske, *German Social Democracy 1905-1917* (New York, 1965), esp. p. 108-10.

one governs nature; by a technique that allows discussion only between engineers, along the lines of efficiency.”⁵⁸

The incessant reiteration in Soviet Marxism that the dialectic was an objective law, independent from the will of men, indicated what O. Negt, a student of the Frankfurt School, has called “the Angst of subjectivity” in Soviet Marxism.⁵⁹ The condition of Russia as an isolated and threatened revolution required, or more precisely seemed to require, on the political plane, the Bolshevization of the Communist movement, where all the national parties served to preserve the Soviet Union. In the theoretical dimension the objective laws of reality were stressed which would endorse Soviet policy as truth itself; they provided the legitimization that the Soviet leaders and policy needed. Subjectivity was exorcised as the task was to passively fortify and construct the Russian infrastructure; passively, that is, in a Marxist sense: evidently with great individual and collective effort, but not with conscious praxis of self-acting men and women. Rather a subject-free dialectic was approved that sought to eclipse human resistance. Marcuse in *Soviet Marxism* captured the convergence of both these moments, the political and the theoretical. “The authoritarian voluntarism which characterized the Stalinist leadership responds to the objective determinant, the reduction of the revolutionary potential in the capitalist countries. As the will of the leadership acts upon the proletariat from above, the theory pronounced by the leadership or endorsed by it assumes rigid determinist forms. The dialectic is petrified into a universal system in which the historical process appears as a ‘natural’ process and in which objective laws [are] over and above the individuals . . .”⁶⁰

This philosophical development of Soviet Marxism was criticized by Korsch in 1924, one year after his and Lukács’ major works. In a small essay he noted the prevailing condemnation of Lukács’ discussion of the dialectical method; yet, he wrote, the positions advanced against Lukács, that of the “empirical method of the natural sciences and the corresponding positive-historical method of the social sciences” were not that of Marxism, but of a bourgeois mode of thought. Korsch rejected the notion that dialectics could be reduced to a system of “the forms of thought.”⁶¹ In 1930, he further expounded on Russian deformations of Marxism and its kinship with that of Kautsky and Social Democracy. “Lenin and his followers unilaterally transfer the dialectic into Object, Nature, and History, and they present knowledge merely as the passive mirror and reflection of this objective Being in the subjective consciousness. In doing so they destroy . . . the dialectical interrelation of *being* and *consciousness* . . . *theory* and *practice* . . .”⁶²

58. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Les Aventures de la dialectique* (Paris, 1955), p. 131.

59. O. Negt, “Introduction,” A. Deborin, N. Bucharin, *Kontroversen* . . . p. 36.

60. H. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism* (New York, 1961), p. 133-4.

61. Korsch, “Ueber materialistische Dialektik,” in *Marxismus und Philosophie*, p. 171-7.

62. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 117.

Lukács chose another path; he practiced a series of partially real partially feigned self-criticisms so as to remain within the party, unlike Korsch who was expelled. Except for a review of Bucharin's *Theory of Historical Materialism* in 1925 critical of Bucharin's positivist and technological Marxism, Lukács was silent on Soviet deformations of Marxism – and to a point began to practice them himself. He recently has explained that his self-criticisms were in part tactical: “. . . but I knew also – e.g. from that fate that had befallen Karl Korsch – that to be expelled from the Party meant that it would no longer be possible to participate in the struggle against Fascism. I wrote my self-criticism as an ‘entry-ticket’ to such activity”⁶³

III

A final twist in the relationship between philosophy and politics in this period that elucidates the Hegel-Engels-natural science entanglement remains to be indicated. Those in Russia who were in the forefront of the attack on Lukács and Korsch – Deborin and his followers – were known, or became known, within the Russian context as Hegelians and idealists, exactly the charges they were leveling against Lukács. If on one hand they sought to purge western Marxism of traces of Hegel and idealism, on the other they were themselves attacked – and in part admitted – the same Hegelianisms. Charged with being a Hegelian a Deborinite exclaimed, “Yes! We are Hegelians! Everything great in modern history has been in one way or the other connected with Hegel’s name.”⁶⁴

This apparent paradox can in part be traced to the ambiguity of the Hegel legacy which itself informed the ambiguity of Engels’ thought. Engels’ natural science bent was nourished by what is today a forgotten moment of Hegel’s thought. Engels wrote to Marx, “. . . by the way, do send me Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* as you promised. I am doing some physiology . . . There are some highly speculative things here, all of which have only recently been discovered . . . I am very eager to see if the old man did not scent something of them . . . Everything is the cell. The cell is Hegel’s ‘being-in-itself’ and its development undergoes exactly the Hegelian process . . .”⁶⁵ That Engels’ vulgar Marxism was in fact bolstered by Hegel would seem to be a reversal, as it is usually considered that the study of Hegel served to emancipate Marxism from vulgar materialism rather than perpetrate it. J. Revai, in one of the few sympathetic

63. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. xxx.

64. Cited in and see the fine study of D. Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science* (New York, 1961), p. 122.

65. Marx, Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, p. 108-9. See the argument and discussion in Z.A. Jordan, *Evolution of Dialectical Materialism* (New York, 1967). “Engels’ conception of the relation of natural science to philosophy is purely Hegelian.” p. 98-9.

contemporary reviews of *History and Class Consciousness* alluded to this problem; the very Marxists most entranced by the natural sciences, such as Engels and Plekhanov, were also the consciously Hegelian Marxists: “. . . the preservers of the Hegelian tradition in Marxism were exactly mostly these ‘orthodox’ Marxists who linked Marxism philosophically to naturalistic materialism.”⁶⁶ However the Hegel that was important to these Marxists was not the same Hegel important to Lukács, et al; to the former it was the Hegel of the universal movement of contradictions, of quantity to quality, of the processes of quasi-automatic transformation; to the latter it was the Hegel of the historical movement of consciousness, of the subject-object dialectic.

Yet there was a common ground for these two Hegelian Marxist traditions, and it was on account of this that the Deborinites were considered and finally condemned as Lukácsians; this common ground was the defense of philosophy in general within Marxism, while the ground radically parted when it came to the specific content of the philosophy. Where these two traditions diverged and converged in turn can be seen in the political fate of the Deborinites; at first endorsed against the Hegelian Marxists and the Russian mechanists, and finally officially condemned for being of the same stuff as the Hegelian Marxism. The Russian mechanists, against whom the Deborinites were essentially directed, advanced a teaching that maintained all philosophy to be irrelevant to Marxism; they sought to purge philosophy from Marxism in favor of the natural sciences. Hence they paralleled the vulgar Marxism that Korsch and Lukács were resisting in western Europe. In a crude form it was expounded by S. Minin in an article entitled “Overboard with Philosophy!” “Philosophy is a prop of the bourgeoisie. Not idealist, not metaphysical philosophy only, but precisely philosophy in general, philosophy as such . . . In a word the proletariat retains and must retain science, only science, but no kind of philosophy.”⁶⁷ Against the positivism of these mechanists, the Deborinites defended the importance of philosophy. Doctrines declaring the end of philosophy, wrote Deborin, led “to a capitulation of Marxism before the bourgeois philosophical teachings, to a capitulation of Marxism before the ideology of the bourgeoisie.” Such a triumph of the “anti-philosophers” entailed the “capitulation of the proletariat in ideas” which is the beginning of the “political capitulation.”⁶⁸

Within the context of the Russian scene, the Deborinites were assuming a position analogous to that of Lukács and Korsch. Against the mechanists who would replace philosophy with natural science, Deborin followed Engels – and Hegel – on the importance of philosophy. “The historical role of philosophy Engels justified with the observation, ‘the natural scientists might assume

66. J. Revai, “Rezension von G. Lukács,” *Grünberg Archiv*, II (1925), reprinted in *Lukácsdebatte*, p. 2-3.

67. Joravsky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science*, p. 96.

68. Cited in R. Ahlberg, *‘Dialektische Philosophie’ und Gesellschaft in der Sowjetunion* (Berlin, 1960), p. 39.

whatever attitude they wish, they will be ruled by philosophy.' In consequence of that philosophy . . . develops general theory and strives for mental constructions of the totality and general connection of appearance."⁶⁹ The accent in Deborin's and Engels' formulation is at once on the autonomy of philosophy vis-a-vis the natural sciences, but of an autonomy that hints of a dictatorial relationship: philosophy *rules* the natural sciences. "Deborin, like Engels," wrote one commentator, "fought to preserve an independent status over and above the positive natural sciences."⁷⁰

It was the authoritarian content of these formulations that brought down the implicit approval of the Soviet state on the side of the Deborinites — an approval not out of pure love for authority, but because the natural scientists in general were suspect as counter-revolutionary and harboring bourgeois sympathies. "The clear tendency of official policy during the twenties was to undermine the ideological autonomy of natural scientists."⁷¹ Hence it was the mechanists' defense of the autonomy of natural sciences vis-à-vis philosophy that was suspect. The resolution of the All-Russian Conference of Marxist-Leninist Researchers in 1929 condemning the mechanists stated in part: "Fundamentally they lead a fight against the philosophy of Marxist-Leninism . . . and foist on the revolutionary materialistic dialectic a vulgar evolutionism and materialism — positivism. They objectively obstruct the penetration of the natural sciences by the methodology of dialectical materialism."⁷²

Yet the Deborinite victory was brief, and brief exactly because the Deborinites despite major differences still shared with Lukács, et. al., a concern for Hegel and philosophy as an autonomous field of study, though be it a formalized Hegel and philosophy. Even this in the later stages of Bolshevization and Stalinization was intolerable, suggesting that philosophy itself was exempt from party dictates. They stood accused of studying too much Hegel — and too little Lenin — and of 'Hegelianizing' Marxism. "The 'Hegelianization' of Marxism goes so far that for example in the philosophical section of the Institute of Red Professors [a Deborinite stronghold] the entire effort for 3 to 4 years turned exclusively around Hegel's *Science of Logic*," stated M. Mitin, who was to become in subsequent years a major Stalinist philosopher, in a speech of condemnation.⁷³ Rather a notion of partisanship or 'partyness' of philosophy was advanced that made philosophy a direct adjunct of the practical needs of the party. In this perspective the philosophical position of Lukács and Deborin converged, as did their political fate; both were Hegelian idealist deviations in that neither was prepared to simply endorse the prevailing materialism or praxis of the party. Mitin announced the liquidation of all autonomous philosophical

69. A Deborin, "Materialistische Dialektik und Naturwissenschaft," in *Kontroversen* . . . p. 130.

70. G. Wetter, *Dialectical Materialism* (London, 1958), p. 160.

71. Jorvasky, *Soviet Marxism and Natural Science*, p. 222.

72. Cited in Ahlberg, *'Dialektische Philosophie' und Gesellschaft* . . . p. 79.

73. M. Mitin, "Ueber die Ergebnisse der philosophische Diskussion," in Deborin, Bucharin, *Kontroversen* . . . p. 366-7.

thought. The Leninist concept of the 'partyiness' of philosophy was "the best antidote against the presently strong and bold tendencies of revisionism in Marxist philosophy – its idealist Hegelian form – beginning with Lukács and ending with the Deborin group."⁷⁴

IV

With the victory over the Deborinites and the Stalinization of the Communist movement, the pursuit of theoretical questions devolved on those outside the Communist Party, such as those thinkers collectively known as the Frankfurt School; for purposes here it will be considered as T.W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Max Horkheimer. For evident reasons, that of exile, the political meaning of the Frankfurt School's work lost its immediacy; the philosophical and the political diverged, only to begin to converge in recent years. Yet they as much or more than any kept alive and further developed the questions here under discussion. Only several relevant moments of their work can be suggested here.

It has often been mentioned that Marcuse's early essays, as well as his first book on Hegel, *Hegels Ontologie*, bear the imprint of Heidegger;⁷⁵ of especial concern to Marcuse was the category of "Geschichlichkeit," "historicity." In an essay from 1928 he wrote, "the basic dialectical discipline is the essential science of historicity in general, its structure, the laws of motion, and possible existential forms of historical existence."⁷⁶ To be remembered however is that these efforts which can be easily written off as a futile attempt to supplement Marxism with an existential ontology were efforts directed against the decay of Marxism into a dogma by the Soviets and into an academic science by Social Democrats; in either case it resulted in the dehistoricization or formulation of Marxism.

The grounding of Marxism in an existential ontology of history was intended to subvert this development by injecting concrete history into abstract formulas; it sought to preserve what is unique in Marxism, history as man's praxis, but is lost when history is formalized or equated with nature. An essay on Max Adler from these years, concluded that the "danger" of Adler's Marxism "lies in the transformation of the theory of proletariat revolution into a scientific sociology, which deflects and isolates Marxism from the concrete affliction of the historical situation."⁷⁷ Similarly would Marcuse subject to

74. *Ibid.*, p. 350.

75. For two different discussions of Heidegger and Marcuse see P. Piccone, A. Delfini, "Marcuse's Heideggerian Marxism," *Telos*, 6 (Fall, 1970), p. 36-46; A. Schmidt, "Existential-Ontologie und Historischer Materialismus bei Herbert Marcuse," in *Antwort auf H. Marcuse*, hrsg. J. Habermas (Frankfurt a/Main, 1968), p. 17-49.

76. H. Marcuse, "Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism (1928)," in *Telos*, 4 (Fall, 1969), p. 23f.

77. Marcuse, "Transzendentaler Marxismus?" *Die Gesellschaft*, VIII (1931), reprinted in Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft*, Bd. IV (n.p., n.d.), p. 309.

criticism the work of K. Vorländer,⁷⁸ S. Landshut,⁷⁹ S. Marks⁸⁰ as scholastic or academic flights from the present concrete historical situation. "Marx . . . uncovered the original concept of history, but not . . . for a philosophical determination of life within the existent generally, but for an analysis of the present historical situation of life with the intention of its revolutionary transformation."⁸¹ So too Marcuse's conceptualization of history as a category of being strove to prevent Marxist philosophy from being reduced to 'mere' philosophy; it sought to preclude the possibility of the formalization or dogmatization of Marxism divorced from contemporary existence. Rather as "philosophy arose out of a particular situation of human life as its need and want, so is it thrown back onto the particular form of the real in which alienation dominates life."⁸²

Yet if this was a response to the decay of Marxism it was to Adorno, and ultimately to Marcuse himself, an inadequate response. The very hypostatization of history as being that was to prevent its formalization rendered history itself an ahistorical ontology. In a short review of *Hegels Ontologie* Adorno stated that Marcuse in one aspect deviated from and improved over Heidegger "which he otherwise with the rigor of a student represents." "He tends to move from fundamental ontology to philosophy of history, from historicity to history." Adorno closed his review with a series of questions that left in doubt Marcuse's progress over Heidegger, asking whether his was not in fact a regression to idealism.⁸³ Elsewhere Adorno called Marcuse's book a "radical ontological interpretation" of Hegel "that finally issues into the problematic of the new ontology . . ."⁸⁴

Unlike Marcuse, Adorno, the early and the late, was a determined foe of the existential ontology. Historicity to Adorno kills history by locating it in a timeless being – in nature. Already in his first book *Kierkegaard* Adorno subjects the category of 'historicity' to criticism; "as an abstract possibility of being in time" it is "a piece of pure anthropology." "Exactly what real history depicts, the irreversible and irreducible particularities of historical data is rejected by Kierkegaard."⁸⁵ This is repeated in various forms throughout his entire work. In his polemic against the ontology of Heidegger and Jaspers,

78. Marcuse, "Besprechung von K. Vörländer," *Die Gesellschaft*, VI (1929); reprinted *ibid.*, p. 361f.

79. Marcuse, "Zur Kritik der Soziologie," *Die Gesellschaft*, VIII (1931); reprinted *ibid.*, p. 310f.

80. Marcuse, "Zum Problem der Dialektik" I, II, *Die Gesellschaft*, VII (1930); reprinted *ibid.*, p. 243f.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

82. Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichlichkeit* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1968), p. 14.

83. T. Wiesengrund-Adorno, "Besprechung von H. Marcuse," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, I (1932), p. 407-8.

84. T. Wiesengrund-Adorno, "Besprechung von T. Steinbüchel," *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, II (1933), p. 107-8.

85. T. W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Aesthetischen* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1966), p. 62.

Jargon der Eigentlichkeit, he wrote of the existential fetish of the category of Man; "Man does not create institutions, but particular men in particular constellations with nature and with each other."⁸⁶ Or in *Negative Dialektik*: "Historicity stills history in the unhistorical, unconcerned for the historical conditions . . . it permits the ontologizing of history, which ascribes to the unseen historical forces the force of being and so justifies the subjugation under the historical situation as if it were a commandment of being itself."⁸⁷

Marcuse would seem to have concurred; his first major piece of writing published after Hitler and exile was if not in part a 'self-criticism', at least a definitive break with the language and style of existentialism. In this essay which closed with Heidegger's remarks that not doctrines or ideas rule being, but only the Führer, Marcuse noted that existentialism began as an attempt to save the content of western rationalism "by injecting into it the historical concretion of individual existence."⁸⁸ Yet existentialism balked at looking closer at the "historical situation;" it did not go on to ask "about the real powers and forces that *are* history." Rather a pseudo-concrete "new anthropology" was constructed; "... the strong emphasis on the historicity of existence reveals itself as empty . . . it is possible only on the basis of the . . . deprivation of history. Genuine historicity presupposes a cognitive relation of existence to the forces of history . . . and the theoretical and practical *critique* of these forces."⁸⁹ Existentialism "collapses" "bringing its own history to end."

The existential ontology of history reveals itself as abstract; if it was initiated against a non-historical natural scientific mode of thought it nonetheless annihilated history by reifying its essence as being.⁹⁰ In the Frankfurt School pure history and pure nature, and the corollaries pure subjectivity and pure objectivity, are both untruths; one would dissolve the realm of nature into history, the other history into nature. The pure subjectivity that bills itself uncontaminated by nature coagulates into nature itself, into a historyless mythology of self: such is the drift of Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard. To be avoided is the fetishization of either moment, subjectivity or objectivity, history or nature. Both moments are to be retained; Marcuse in an essay from 1930 defended Lukács on this score. "Exactly Lukács' polemics against Engels . . . shows that Lukács saw quite well the dualism of the being of nature; at once as object of physics completely and totally unhistorical and then as the historical environment of human existence; and throughout he does not conceive

86. T. W. Adorno, *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1966), p. 54.

87. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1970), p. 133.

88. Marcuse, "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," in Marcuse, *Negations* (Boston, 1969), p. 40.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 32-4.

90. See Marcuse's critique of Sartre: "Existentialism. Remarks on J.-P. Sartre's *L'Être et le néant*," *Journal of Philosophical and Phenomenological Research*, VIII, no. 3 (March, 1948), p. 309-336. The German translation in Marcuse, *Kultur und Gesellschaft 2* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1965) includes a final brief section re-appraising Sartre since 1948: "Pure ontology and phenomenology recede before the breakthrough of real history . . . philosophy becomes politics . . ." p. 84.

of nature solely as a social product with no residue.”⁹¹

The irreducible and integral element of nature in the dialectic of history that Marcuse here is defending in Lukács is a vital nerve of the Frankfurt School theory. The paradigm of this relationship between nature and history is labor – labor which is at once part of nature and history, but is neither totally one nor the other. The critique of the mechanistic and natural scientific Marxism in the Frankfurt School does not result in the neglect or elimination of nature as such. Rather it is explored as part of history and separate from history.

Adorno in his book on Hegel, and Walter Benjamin elsewhere, refer to the first sentences of Marx’s critique of the Gotha Program. There Marx countered the statement in the Gotha Program that “labor is the source of all wealth and culture” with a paragraph that began “labour is *not the source* of all wealth. *Nature* is just as much the source of use values . . . as is labour . . .”⁹² Marx was objecting to formulations that abstracted labor from its concrete historical and natural conditions without which it is nonsense. To follow Adorno what is true for labor is true for thought, which is ultimately a moment of labor. He wrote in his Hegel book that “corporeal work is necessarily referred to that what it itself is not – to nature. Without the concept of nature work, and its reflection Geist can be as little conceived as nature without work . . .”⁹³

Two essays by Marcuse, one directly on the concept of work, and the other written on the occasion of the publication of Marx’s *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*, as well as the work of the Frankfurt School student A. Schmidt, have unfolded the concept of work. To Marx, according to Marcuse, work is both natural – intrinsic to man – and historical. It is a “constitutive moment of the whole praxis of human existence.”⁹⁴ Man without objectifying himself, without praxis in nature is a non-entity. Or to follow Schmidt, Marx’s use of the concept of “Stoffwechsel” indicates the intrinsic and irreducible elements in the interaction of nature and man.⁹⁵ But the particular form that work takes, or the form of “Stoffwechsel” is historically determined; with capitalism it is wage labor. It is this form which can be transformed, but not labor or ‘Stoffwechsel’ as such. “Objectification belongs as such to the essence of man – as his nature – and hence cannot be ‘aufgehoben;’ according to revolutionary theory only a particular form of objectification can and should be ‘aufgehoben;’ reification, alienation.”⁹⁶

Labor is natural and historical – and unfree; unfree historically and free

91. Marcuse, “Zum Problem der Dialektik,” Adorno, et al *Kritische Theorie*, Bd. IV, p. 260-1.

92. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (New York, 1966), p. 3.

93. Adorno, *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1969), p. 35.

94. Marcuse, “ueber die philosophischen Grundlagen des wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Arbeitsbegriffs,” in *Kultur und Gesellschaft* 2, p. 14.

95. A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Marx* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1967), p. 63f.

96. Marcuse, “Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung des Historischen Materialismus,” *Ideen zu einer kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1969), p. 22.

naturally. Is there a natural and free essence that is overlaid with a history of unfreedom. The exploration of freedom and necessity not simply in history, but in nature belongs to the Frankfurt School's unique contribution to Marxism; not only the question of laws and the dialectic of nature were re-examined and redefined, but a hitherto neglected concept, that of "second nature," was enunciated. The conceptualization of "second nature" in turn depended on a reformulation of nature as such – first nature. To the Frankfurt School the realm of nature as such participated in unfreedom and suffering. This was not without precedent in Marxism. Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology* ridiculed the romantic and sentimental notions of the 'true' socialists that nature was composed of freedom and happiness. Citing a 'true' socialist to the effect that in nature there are "gay flowers" "tall and stately oaks," serene meadows, etc., they noted one could observe in nature "the bitterest competition among plants and animals," where the oaks "consume the nutriments of the tiny shrubs," where there is "open warfare" between the birds and the meadow insects, etc. They quoted Hegel's statement that animals are the "concrete anguish of God."⁹⁷

The argument is that the realm of nature itself is one of necessity, suffering, and non-freedom. This notion, which can only be mentioned here, was loyally pursued by the Frankfurt School, and can be found through to Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*.⁹⁸ "In Nature as well as in History, the struggle for existence is the token of scarcity, suffering, and want."⁹⁹ Or as Benjamin once wrote, "Nature is sad because it is mute. However the inverse formulation is more profound close to the essence of nature: the sadness of nature renders it mute."¹⁰⁰ Nature itself is unfree – and little has the Frankfurt School resisted more than the notion that it must always be so. Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason*, like Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*, cites the Pope's refusal to endorse the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals as the quintessence of the outlook that dooms nature to be forever imprisoned in unfreedom.¹⁰¹

Nature is unfree and consequently its laws are laws of unfreedom; they register a condition of determinism and necessity. The laws of nature and history *do converge*, for history too is still a condition of unfreedom, necessity, and suffering. Its laws like the laws of nature are tokens of the lack of choice; they too bespeak of necessity and determinism. Yet the distinction persists: history is made by men and nature is not. The distinction is vital; if it is lost then the laws of history are simply equated with the laws of nature: they are made timeless

97. Marx, Engels, *German Ideology* (Moscow, 1964), p. 519; 521.

98. Cf. "Reversals and Lost Meanings," in *Critical Interruptions: New Left Perspectives on Herbert Marcuse*, ed. P. Breines (New York, 1970), p. 66-70.

99. Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1966), p. 236.

100. Cited in S. Weber, "Lecture de Benjamin," *Critique*, 267-8 (Août-Septembre, 1969), p. 703.

101. M. Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York, 1947), p. 104-5. To be noted also is the critique of sentimental and ideological love for animals in the Frankfurt School as in Horkheimer, "Egoism und Freiheitsbewegung," in *Traditionelle und kritische Theorie* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1970), p. 157.

and unchangeable. Rather the laws in history exist, are natural, blind, and fateful, but are ultimately grounded in human institutions. They are specifically historical: they can be changed. Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution* enunciated this. "The dialectical analysis of social reality . . . shows this reality to be overpowered by objective mechanism that operates with the necessity of 'natural' (physical) laws . . . The movement is dialectical in itself inasmuch as it is not yet piloted by the self-conscious activity of freely associating individuals."¹⁰²

The category of consciousness and self-consciousness resurfaces. The specific content of the laws, historical and natural – their unfreedom – is that they are outside conscious control. They are unfree in that they proceed by necessity, not by conscious choice. But again the distinction of a natural and historical reality is critical: the lack of consciousness that makes the laws inexorable is a point intrinsic to nature, but outside nature the lack of consciousness is historical: it need not be so. "The dialectical notion of historical laws," wrote Marcuse in a small essay on Popper, "implies no other destiny than that which men create for themselves under the condition of unmastered nature and society. The less a society is rationally organized and directed by the collective efforts of free men, the more it will appear as an individual whole governed by 'inexorable' laws . . ."¹⁰³

The distinction between Comte's laws and Marx's expressed the difference between a natural and dialectically natural law. To Comte, positive sociology was to be a "new natural science;" history was transformed into an "anthropological category."¹⁰⁴ As such its laws were invariant; ". . . if with Marx the laws are to be known in order to be historically transcended, with Comte they lead to a totality of social bindings."¹⁰⁵ Marcuse wrote citing Comte, "the 'general dogma of the invariability of physical laws' Comte calls the 'free spirit' of positivism." Positive sociology and philosophy tended to "equate the study of society with the study of nature so that natural science, particularly biology, became the archetype of social theory . . . Society was viewed as governed by rational laws that moved with a natural necessity. *This position directly contradicted the view held by dialectical social theory, that society is irrational precisely in that it is governed by natural laws.*¹⁰⁶

History is and is not nature. It is not because it is made by men who could become conscious and freely control their actions; it is because it is still enacted unconsciously, still participates in necessities and identical cycles that are intrinsic to nature. A. Schmidt has noted one could add to Lukács' statement that society is a social category, that is also a natural category.¹⁰⁷ As Adorno

102. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution* (Boston, 1960), p. 316.

103. Marcuse, "Notes on the Problem of Historical Laws," *Partisan Review*, 26 (Winter, 1959), p. 117f.

104. O. Massing, *Fortschritt und Gegenrevolution. Die Gesellschaftslehre Comtes in ihrer sozialen Funktion* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 56.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

106. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, p. 343-4. Emphasis added.

107. A. Schmidt, "Zum Verhältnis von Geschichte und Natur im dialektischen Materialismus," in *Existentialismus und Marxismus* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1965), p. 10.

formulated it: "The natural laws of history are ideology so far as they are hypostatized as unchangeable givens of nature. But they are real as the laws of movement of an unconscious society."¹⁰⁸ It was these two movements that Marx captured when he wrote of the natural laws of capitalist society; they were natural as objectively produced by the social structure; and yet they were historical as the product of one man-made social system. What Marx wrote of the physiocrats announced these two moments. "It was their great merit that they conceived these forms [of production] as physiological forms of society: as the forms that are independent of anyone's will or of politics, etc. They are material laws; the error is only that the material law of a definite historical social state is conceived as an abstract law governing equally all forms of society."¹⁰⁹

History is nature only in a critical and polemical sense. Only ironically, remarked Adorno, was Marx a Social Darwinist. History is, so to speak, not nature itself, but "zweite Natur" "second nature." The concept of "second nature" recurs throughout the writings of the Frankfurt School. According to an essay of Horkheimer's its origin can be found in Democritus. Against Aristotle's notion that a Man's qualifications to rule or to serve were determined at birth – by, as it were, nature – Democritus argued that they were formed by education, which was a second nature.¹¹⁰ The concept can be found in Hegel,¹¹¹ but in its modern form it derives from Lukács' premarxist *Theorie des Romans*.

In this Lukács correlated a transformation in art forms to a transformation in the objective conditions. The heroes of the novel, unlike the heroes of the past, are formed against "the strangeness of the outer world." Now the "self-created surroundings are for men no longer a home, but a prison." The outer world has rigidified into a "world of convention," into a "second nature," ruled by an alien power, "distant, eternal, and unchangeable necessity." This second nature, unlike the first, is "numbing and foreign;" it is the "crucifixion of murdered interiority."¹¹²

Second nature comprehends the contradiction that capitalism destroyed the personal and 'natural' relations of feudalism in favor of crass monetary ones which in turn coagulated into a new 'natural' relation. Lukács in a small essay from 1921 noted that the natural sciences and related natural law social theory were a progressive force for a rising bourgeoisie, shaking the belief in the god-given authority and order of feudalism. Yet it also has the function of encouraging the belief "as if the non-personal 'natural' working laws of capitalist production were independent of human will, indestructible to human effort – as if they were a second nature."¹¹³

If a categorization can be risked, the kernel of Horkheimer's and Adorno's

108. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 347.

109. Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part I (Moscow, 1969), p. 44.

110. Horkheimer, "Berkmerkungen zur philosophischen Anthropologie," in *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft*, Band I (Frankfurt, 1968), p. 220.

111. See for example Hegel, *Reason in History* (New York, 1953), p. 63.

112. Lukács, *Die Theorie der Roman* (Neuwied und Berlin, 1963), p. 62-3.

113. Lukács, "Zur Frage der Bildungsarbeit," in *Wissenschaftlichen Intelligenz*, p. 145.

major philosophical work *Dialektik der Aufklärung* is nothing less than an exploration of second nature in western thought; enlightened thought is at one with mythic natural thought in confirming the given as unchangeable. The formulas and laws of enlightened thought perpetrated history as nature: history as invariant, manipulative but not transformable. The explanation of "every event as repetition, which the enlightenment championed against the mythic forms of imagination was that of the myth itself."¹¹⁴ "In the pregnancy of the mythic image as in the clarity of the scientific formula, the eternity of facts was affirmed."¹¹⁵ Western history and thought is unravelled as second nature, not supassing the struggle for existence, but updating it. In summary: second nature is first nature refracted through but not altered by history; it is as unconscious as first nature with the difference that this unconsciousness is historical not intrinsic. In the perspective of history as second nature, capitalism is but the last – and potentially liberating – configuration; the specific forms of unconsciousness of capitalism are part of the continuum of second nature. In abridged formulation: reification is the capitalist form of second nature; and second nature is the specific form of history of an unliberated humanity.

If reification and second nature are social forms of unconsciousness, their undoing presupposes consciousness, the dissolution of false consciousness or social unconsciousness; it requires subjective insight into objective reality. The category of Geist or consciousness returns. Abstracted from the social whole consciousness or subjectivity threatens to be mythological; but consciousness as part and parcel of a historical continuum is a critical consciousness "that has plucked the imaginary flower from the chain not so that man will wear the chain without any fantasy or consolation, but so that he will shake off the chain and cull the living flower."¹¹⁶ Consciousness is an essential moment in the movement from object to subject, from reification to self-activity. Geist, wrote Lukács in 1919, "or the meaning of the social development of man, climbs out of the condition of unconsciousness by way of the class consciousness created by Marxism. Thereby the laws of social development cease to be blind, catastrophic, fateful; they awake to self-reflection, to consciousness."¹¹⁷

The transition to a free society is mediated by consciousness and subjectivity; without such mediations social progress is in doubt; such is the teaching of the Frankfurt School. There is no automatic, subjectless progress that Kautsky and others banked on. "Automatic" is employed by Lukács and the Frankfurt School only in a critical sense. Progress that is progress without human intervention and consciousness is fashion: change without change. "Progress in industrialization," wrote Marcuse, "is progress in domination."¹¹⁸ Or Horkheimer and Adorno: "the curse of relentless progress is relentless regression."¹¹⁹

114. Horkheimer, Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam, 1947), p. 23.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

116. Marx, "Contributions to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," in *Marx and Engels on Religion* (New York, 1964), p. 42.

117. Lukács, "Taktik und Ethik," in *Wissenschaftlichen Intelligenz*, p. 18.

118. Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism*, p. 69.

119. Horkheimer, Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 50.

Even the older Marx, it would seem, minimized the role of the subject, capitulating to a bourgeois mode of automatic progress. Horkheimer has taken to task the idea used by Marx of "Geburtshilfe," aiding the birth of a new social order.¹²⁰ "The knowledge of historical laws which rule the forms of society should according to the St. Simonians mitigate the revolution. . . according to the Marxists, accelerate it. . . The teaching of Geburtshilfetum reduced the revolution to mere progress." Progress remained imprisoned within the laws of history; the end of capitalist exploitation is "no acceleration of progress, but the leap out of progress."¹²¹ Similarly W. Benjamin would write; the Social Democratic notion of ceaseless progress was based on a "conception of a homogeneous and empty time." Rather revolution is a break in the continuum of history; it is a "tiger's leap into the past."¹²²

The basis of this idea is found in Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*; the blind laws of capitalism lead to a crisis – but not beyond. These are the laws of unfreedom and the laws of bourgeois progress and can guarantee only more of the same. The resolution of the crisis rests ultimately on the consciousness of the actors. On this consciousness depends whether the crisis will issue into barbarism or the laws of unfreedom will cease. Horkheimer in *Dämmerung*, published under a pseudonym, seconded Lukács. "From the economic laws discovered by Marx socialism does not 'follow' . . ." ¹²³ Rather Marx has shown only the "lever" – the praxis that needs theory – that can break the blind course of history.

The lever remained abstract; it was barely concretized. Philosophy and politics diverged. According to one of Lukács' formulations, organization is the mediation between theory and praxis, and organization – in Lukács' final stage – was the party. Such a discussion as Lukács' as to the nature of a revolutionary organization is not to be found in the Frankfurt School writings. Rather they often employed the image of the Archimedean point as a locus where theory and praxis could begin to converge; ". . . the break through false consciousness may provide the Archimedean point for a larger emancipation – at an infinitesimally small spot, to be sure, but it is on the enlargement of such small spots that the chance of change depends."¹²⁴ Such abstract formulations were chosen less, as often been alleged, out of "panic Angst" before praxis,¹²⁵ than dictated by the conditions of the defeat of the German working class, Hitler, and exile that rendered a discussion of organization itself scholastic. Only in recent years has the question resurfaced. Yet in an essay from 1940 "Authoritärer Staat," Horkheimer broached some thoughts on organization that can be read as a response to the glorification of

120. See the first preface to *Capital*.

121. Horkheimer, *Authoritärer Staat* (Amsterdam, 1968), p. 61-2.

122. W. Benjamin, "Geschichtsphilosophische Thesen," *Zur Kritik der Gewalt* (Frankfurt a/Main, 1965), p. 90-1.

123. H. Regius (Max Horkheimer), *Dämmerung* (n.p., 1934), p. 64.

124. Marcuse, "Critique of Repressive Tolerance," in R. Wolff, et al, *Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston, 1965), p.111.

125. O. Massing, *Adorno und die Folgen* (Neuwied und Berlin, 1970), p. 43.

the party by Lukács in the final part of *History and Class Consciousness*.

In this essay by Horkheimer, which has been important in recent years for the German socialist youth organization, Horkheimer analyzed both the mass party and the revolutionary vanguard notions of revolution as the bad alternatives *within* bourgeois reality. The mass party is not the negation of the state, but its competitor;¹²⁶ the vanguard elite threatens to reduplicate the authoritarianism of bourgeois society. "So long as the party was still a group, its anti-authoritarian goal is not estranged. . . so long as the vanguard is able to act without periodic purges it lives with the hope of a classless society." But the specific configurations – what is a group? – are unimportant next to the dissolution of the laws of unfreedom. "One can determine what the Führer will still do to the masses when neither – the Führer or the masses – is transcended. That belongs to the immanent laws of development. One cannot determine what a free society will do or permit." The dissolution of these laws is the dissolution of the spell that has frozen the subject-object into a second nature. Its undoing as revolutionary praxis follows no pre-arranged plan; this is as far as the Frankfurt School could go: ". . . there is no patent system to work out . . . The modalities of the new society will be discovered only in the course of the transformation."¹²⁷

126. See Horkheimer's discussion from 1936 on the difference between a proletarian mass and a non-proletarian one in "Egoismus und Freiheitsbewegung, in *Traditionelle und kritische Theorie*, p. 126-8; 146f.

127. Horkheimer, *Autoritärer Staat*, p. 58-68.

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