

A KEY PROBLEM OF METHOD: DUALISM AND DICHOTOMIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY IN CAPITAL'S EPOCH

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1. THE HIDDEN PREMISSES OF DICHOTOMOUS SYSTEMS

THE philosophers who share 'the standpoint of political economy' (i.e. the standpoint of capital, according to Marx) tend to present us with dichotomies and dualistically articulated 'solutions' to the problems at stake. In Hannah Arendt's case, for instance, 'understanding' is opposed to 'doing', 'theory' to 'practice', the 'political' to the 'social', 'judgement' to the 'technical reasoning' of the 'strictly economic sphere', etc. The fact that the technical imperatives of production — both within a given factory and in the organization of the productive apparatus as a whole — are based on the fundamental, and capitalistically most vital, *social* premise of the *forcible separation of labour* from the *means* of production, *must* remain outside the framework of such reasoning.¹ It must remain so as a matter of ideological determination which has

¹ Hannah Arendt waters down the problem of expropriation to that of 'exorbitant taxes'. The function of such upside-down categorization is to turn the privileged expropriators (who happen to pay the 'exorbitant taxes') into the real victims of the system. Beyond that, only a 'residual' problem is acknowledged: the undeniable persistence of poverty; Arendt, however, expects that to be resolved by 'neutral technical means'. Such a solution is, of course, an empty 'ought', conceived in the spirit of systematically avoiding the structural problem of capitalist exploitation. The whole conceptual framework is constructed in such a way that the permanent structural presupposition of expropriation and exploitation — the forcible and legally safeguarded separation of labour from the means of production — should not even appear on the horizon, let alone assume the strategic centre of the social confrontation. This is why Arendt conceptualizes the political sphere and its potential role in intervening in economic exploitation in this way. For, once the structural foundations of the system are taken for granted, the margin of political action against the acknowledged inequalities is practically meaningless, and recommended solution is nothing but an empty 'ought'. As her sympathetic commentator, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl recalls with some bafflement:

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there is a vested interest in assuming the existing 'organic system' as simply *given*, refusing to consider the dynamics of its *genesis* and potential *dissolution*: both identifiable (with relative ease from a radically different social standpoint) in the focal point of the system's *antagonistic presuppositions*.

It cannot be stressed enough, the *necessary presuppositions* of the given socio-economic system do not reside in an obscure region of the remote *past*, so as to relegate the question of their assessment to the realm of purely academic interest. On the contrary, they constitute one of the most vital dimensions of the constantly unfolding *present*, with far-reaching theoretical and practical implications as regards the feasible social alternatives and strategies. For, no matter how antagonistic in their inner determinations, the presuppositions themselves must be - as, indeed, to our own days they are - successfully *reproduced* in the overall process of capitalist reproduction, together with all of the other constituent parts of the system in question; if, that is, the productive system of so-called 'modern industrial' and 'post-industrial' society is not to disintegrate under the weight of its manifold contradictions.

There is a tendency to disregard this crucial aspect of the societal reproduction process, thanks to the mystifying power of the dominant ideology. For, as a rule, the latter has an immense positional advantage in choosing the terrain as well as in marking out the parameters within which theoretical debates must be conducted in historical periods of relative stability. And, of course, the ruling ideology fully exploits that advantage by taking for granted its own (unmentioned) ideological premises - which happen to coincide with the established order's necessary practical presuppositions for successful self-reproduction - as the incontestable terms of reference of all legitimate 'technical reasoning' as well as 'value-judgement'.

'[Arendt] wanted a solution to the problem of poverty that did not, does not dictate a form of government.' (E. Young-Bruehl, 'From the Pariah's Point of View', in Melvyn A. Hill (ed.), H. Arendt: *The Recovery of the Public World*. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1979, p.24.)

With that proviso, both the established socioeconomic system and the 'form of government which it dictates' can continue their rule, leaving the problem of 'poverty' (which is itself relative to the general wealth of the given society, while expropriation/exploitation is a structural absolute) to the totally vacuous 'ought' of 'strictly economic technical neutrality'.

Naturally, the systematic theoretical *separation* of the (eternalized) *functional characteristics* of the given system from the investigation of their *dynamic*, past as well as present, *presuppositions* (which are one-sidedly and fallaciously assigned to the 'specialized' field of academic historiography, if considered at all), and thereby the *obliteration* of the ideologically most embarrassing and directly challengeable dimension of the capitalist reproduction process, is itself an integral part of the overall process of societal reproduction. Indeed, this is one of the most important ways in which the ruling ideology actively helps to articulate and modify, in accord with the changing circumstances but within well marked structural limits,² the complex network of - individual and collective, as well as material and ideal - determinations which secure and safeguard the continued reproduction of the established social order, with all its practical presuppositions.

It is not too difficult to see that the dualistic methodology and the dichotomous articulation of the categories are very useful weapons in the service of the dominant ideological interests. For their combined effect is the imposition of extremely problematical lines of demarcation on the way in which the identified problems can be evaluated.

Such categorical and methodological lines of demarcation, in their more or less explicit stipulating functions, amount to the establishment of rigid taboos (like the claimed categorical impossibility to derive 'ought' from 'is', 'values' from 'facts', etc.). As a result, the dynamic link between the given structure of the social totality on the one hand, and its original historical constitution and ongoing transformations, on the other, is completely obfuscated.

Thus, it is by no means surprising that the tension between the *structural* (or 'synchronic', 'systematic', 'structural/functional') and the *historical* (or 'diachronic', 'genetic') aspects of theory should be so endemic to this entire philosophical tradition. Nor indeed that the manifestation of this tension should

² It is also worth noting in this context that the position of the essentially negative ruling ideology, and the practical consciousness of its antagonist (whose objective is the replacement of the established system by a positively defined new social order, with qualitatively different presuppositions for the continued societal reproduction) cannot be considered symmetrical.

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culminate in the twentieth century in the most extreme conceptualizations of dualism and dichotomies through various forms of '*structuralism*' and '*historicism*' which confront one another in their reified separateness.

2. THE FUNCTIONAL IMPERATIVE OF OPERATIONAL EXCLUSIVENESS

IN the social totality itself the inherited and always rigidly reasserted pre-suppositions of the established productive system, and its more transient features, are reproduced simultaneously. They are reproduced as inextricably conjoined elements of a unified, organic process. Indeed, the organic character of society's self-reproduction asserts itself in virtue of the *practical inseparability* of its various dimensions under normal circumstances.

To put it in another way, in any historically given social totality the *valuational* (or '*axiological*') and *functional* (in capitalist society as a rule also '*technical/technological*') determinations are so closely intertwined that even theoretically they cannot be clearly separated without adopting a critical vantage point vis-à-vis the established system. For, as a result of the relentless process of practical confounding, the structurally dominant and institutionalized values tend to appear in a technical/instrumental guise (precisely because they happen to be already institutionalized), assigning only their adversaries to the realm of contestable values.

Accordingly, since the established order must take itself for granted as being '*beyond contest*' in its fundamental structural articulation, its already institutionalized values can easily assume the cloak of pure instrumentality. At the same time, *critical* values - i.e., values that appear openly as such, without the disguise of uncontentious instrumentality - must be condemned as '*heresy*', or more recently as '*oppositional irrationality*', '*emotivism*', etc.

The perverse practical confounding manifest in these phenomena can be clearly identified in such institutions, for instance, as the '*Holy Inquisition*'. For while in its claims to be the '*defender of the faith*' against all heresy the Holy Inquisition openly asserts values, the thus advocated specific set of values is never allowed to be considered as one of a possible multiplicity of (contestable) *alternative*

sets. On the contrary, it must be presented as the one and only conceivable regulator and instrumental framework of the divinely ordained social whole.

Moreover, since the crucial issue from the standpoint of the established order is always the effective control of the practically dominant instrumentality, the open admission of the latter's association with values is feasible only so long as the socially entrenched set of values can sustain its *exclusive* claims to existence, as in the case of the Holy Inquisition itself.

There can be no 'tolerance' at the level of the dominant instrumentality. This is why as soon as (in the course of actual historical development) values are admitted to belong to *legitimately competing* alternative sets - not in the aftermath of the miraculously advancing 'principle of rationality' and 'calculation', but as a result of the unfolding class struggle in which the bourgeoisie in the ascendant still plays a positive role - the practical relationship of instrumentality to values requires a drastic realignment.

In this sense, parallel to the consolidation of capital's socio-economic order, the contest of the rival sets of values must be transferred to a separate realm, where their confrontations cannot endanger the practical functioning of the new structure. For what decides the issue in the end is the *practical intolerance* of the one and only set of operational rules with which capital's mode of social control is actually compatible, notwithstanding the broadly diffused ideology of 'pluralism'.

In reality the over publicized 'pluralism' has for its terms of reference the *plurality of capitals* only, but *never* the possibility of instituting a meaningful valuational and functional alternative to the rule of capital itself.

The practically enforced rule of operational *exclusiveness* (on the plane of the dominant instrumentality) corresponds to an objective *functional imperative* of the given socio-economic system, and it must prevail precisely in that form. In complete contrast, the ideology of 'tolerance' with regard to alternative sets of values arises at a time in history when the bourgeoisie is still an 'outsider' and therefore must negate the regulatory 'intolerance' of the old order that prevents its advancement. Once, however, the bourgeois order of society is consolidated

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and capital can assert its *structural intolerance* as a matter of course, 'tolerance' itself must be exiled to the separate sphere of abstract and impotent values.

Thus 'competition' is admissible as right and proper so long as it can be contained within the limits that correspond to the plurality of capitals. Should such competition, though, assume the form of a new set of values that envisages or implies a real functional alternative to the given framework of structural intolerance, it must be disqualified and, if necessary, repressed with all means at the system's disposal. For nothing may be allowed to disturb the 'rational functionality' - i.e., the specific mode of valuation and instrumental determination - of the established order.

SINCE any particular social order is compatible with only one fundamental set of values at the level of its operational/instrumental structures, there must be historically specific ways in which the rival sets - which arise spontaneously out of the objective contradictions and antagonisms of the given socio-economic order itself - are practically dealt with. The *exclusiveness* mentioned above is a *functional imperative* of all social orders, since the fundamental regulator of the social metabolism cannot be other than a *totalizing* one. Nevertheless, the specific historical forms in which this functional imperative prevails in different social formations can be radically different from one another.

The contrast becomes clearer if we remind ourselves of the fact that capital must establish its own credentials in the course of historical development against a social-economic order which claims the absolute validity of 'divine commands' with regard to what happens to constitute two of the principal obstacles to the progressively unfolding power of capital.

- The first concerns the practical dogma of 'non-alienability of land' whose abolition is absolutely vital to the development of capitalistic agriculture.
- And the second major obstacle that cannot be tolerated by the bourgeoisie in the ascendant is the Christian prohibition imposed on 'usury' (interest), or 'profit upon lending without alienation of capital', to put it in the language of the heated controversies of the age.

Thus, capital must define itself, at first, as an admittedly *historical* - but on that score by no means less legitimate and viable, nor indeed with regard to its future aspirations less permanent - *global alternative* to the established order.

This is obviously in sharp contrast to the attitude of its established social adversary. For the latter categorically rejects the very idea of a possible alternative to itself in its exclusive self-identification with the only admissible set of values for which it claims not merely historical but *divine* lineage, in order to justify its apriori superiority to all conceivable contingency. (The Holy Inquisition is of course only a particular institutional expression - under rather special historical circumstances - of this direct structural coincidence and open identification of *absolutized values* with *dominant instrumentality*.)

However, also in the case of capital, its self-definition as an alternative set of historically constituted values is by no means the end of the process. For the ultimately always prevailing functional imperative of exclusiveness - anticipated, in a curious way, by the bourgeois conceptualization of the world: one that forcefully *rejects* 'eternalization' in its theological/intolerant form and at the same time *reconstitutes* it in a new secular form by claiming to have *Reason as such* (in its atemporal and in principle incontestable absoluteness) on its side - must reassert itself once capital is in overall control of the social metabolism.

Significantly, therefore, in the course of capitalistic developments we can witness a radical shift in the meaning of the concept of 'alternative'. For one thing, it loses its formerly *global* sense - i.e., its properly axiological dimension - which is in principle transferred to the separate '*realm of values*'. At the same time, in the spirit of the practically prevailing new partiality, a strictly *limited* sense of 'alternative' is retained on the *functional/instrumental* plane, corresponding to the innermost structural determination of capital as the *plurality of competing* - and in that narrow sense 'alternative' - *capitals*.

Furthermore, both on account of the limited functional definition of the meaning of 'alternative', and in virtue of the dualistic separation of the '*realm of values*' from the '*realm of facts*', capital acquires the appearance of an eminently '*rational*' system. And while in reality these shifts of meaning are objectively imposed upon capital itself - in that as a specific mode of overall social control

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capital can neither recognize the legitimacy of any real alternative to its own rule, nor can it constitute an *alternative* to its own mode of operation in any meaningful sense of the term -, the prosaic functional imperative of *totalizing operational exclusiveness* is rationalized and idealized by bourgeois philosophy as the paradigm of 'rational functionality'.

3. RULING VALUES DISGUISED AS INSTRUMENTAL COMPLEXES: THE ILLUSIONS OF VALUE-FREE FUNCTIONALITY

NATURALLY, the stipulated transfer of the axiological meaning of 'alternative' to a separate realm is essentially a sham. It cannot be other than a sham because the values intrinsic to capital's mode of economic operation and social control must remain the *unmentioned global presuppositions* and *unquestionable practical premises* of the established order, as has been indicated already. Indeed, they must be (and unceremoniously are) enforced as such - directly or indirectly, as the circumstances require - with incomparably greater practical efficacy than what the Holy Inquisition could ever even dream about with regard to its own claims to divinely sanctioned law-enforcement.

Thus objectively, in the actual mode of functioning of this system, the contradiction in values is in no way eliminated or transcended by the adoption of the dualistic categorical framework. It is merely hidden away by postulating the radical separation of 'facts' - i.e., the operational/instrumental/functional determinations of the social complex - and 'values'.

However, there can be no operational/functional determination of a *social* complex (as opposed to that of a limited *mechanical* complex or machine), which is not simultaneously also a *value-determination*. As such, it involves not only some 'original choices', but also '*ongoing choices*' between more or less conflicting alternatives (with far-reaching social implications for each) in necessarily changing situations, as well as the constant reassertion of the viability of the earlier choices, inasmuch as they are being reproduced, in preference to rival possibilities. Consequently, the contradiction of values reaches down to the inner core of the given system and cannot be resolved in the real world within the confines of capital's structural determinations.

This is why the dualistic 'solution' is the only way out of the underlying difficulty. For the generally adopted philosophical dualism is apparently in a position to remove the contradiction in question by abstractly stipulating, on the basis of nothing more than its own decree, that '*there can be no contradiction in values*' (Kant). The contradiction here referred to consists in this: that capital *is* - in its historical genesis and objective constitution - an *alternative* (to its predecessor) which, however, *is not* a genuine alternative, because it cannot tolerate any alternative to itself; hence the end of history and the concomitant 'eternalization' of the already established socio-economic relations once capital is effectively in command of the vital socio-economic processes.

The adoption of this arbitrary postulate brings with it the convenient dissolution of the problem at stake. For taking the categorical postulate of apriori non-conflicting values as the point of departure, one can derive from it two further - ideologically required and 'conclusive' - propositions:

1. 'values must belong to a radically different realm' where they cannot be contradicted by actuality; and
2. since (in virtue of 1) values belong to a realm to which considerations of fact ('*questio facti*') do not and cannot apply, the identified contradictions in value (which we can abundantly perceive in the actuality of the established order, until we decide to blind ourselves to all such evidence through the acceptance of the dualistic categorical matrix itself) are not really contradictions in value, and therefore they are devoid of any real philosophical (in contrast to merely 'contingent' and 'hypothetical') significance.

Moreover, there is yet another important aspect to this dualistic dissolution of the problem. For it not only transfers the questions of value to a separate realm but simultaneously also deprives them of their *social dimension*. What continue to be recognized as belonging to the social sphere proper are only the - allegedly value-free - determinations of operational instrumentality and functionality. Values as such are supposed to concern the individuals as mere individuals only (who have their own 'private demons' in Weber's terminology³), whether the

³ This is how Weber puts it:

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choices and 'moral imperatives' associated with them are conceived in accordance with the commands of Kantian 'practical reason' or degraded to the level of philosophically unjustifiable 'emotionalism'.

Dualism thus prevails both in the form of inventing and opposing *abstract individuality* to the reality of the *social individual*, and in divorcing the value-determinations of the social complex from their functional and instrumental manifestations. And, of course, on both counts the dualistic philosophical remedies arise in response to the untranscendable contradictions of capital's socio-economic practices, providing for them an imaginary solution that rationalizes the world of reified appearance and individualistic fragmentation. Thanks to the 'fetishism of commodity' and the mystifyingly subdivided - yet even more mysteriously unified - structure of productive machinery, the semblance of operational and functional/instrumental 'neutrality' dominates in the real world of social reproduction, infecting social consciousness, too, with the illusions of 'value-free rational functionality' through which the given order successfully establishes its claims to absolute legitimacy.

UNDERSTANDABLY, against such heavy odds it is not only difficult but also well nigh impossible to formulate a critical alternative to the dualistically compartmentalized conception of values within the framework of the dominant ideological discourse, with its pretences to 'methodological neutrality'.

As a matter of universally valid rule which asserts itself with particular severity in the circumstances of generalized commodity production, only under the conditions of major crises can the question of envisaging an alternative framework of (defiantly value-laden) practical premises for an operationally viable new socio-economic system arise in the field of theory, in response to some already unfolding social practice. By the same token, historical periods of

'One thing is the Devil and the other God as far as the individual is concerned, and the individual must decide which, for him, is God and which the Devil. And this is so throughout the orders of life...let us go to our work and satisfy the 'demand of the day' — on the human as much as the professional level. That demand, however, is plain and simple if each of us finds and obeys the demon holding the threads of his life.'

Weber, 'Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre, Tübingen', 1922, pp.545 and 555. Quoted in Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*, Merlin Press, London, 1980, pp.616 and 618.

relative stability are characterized by the paralyzing impact of the *instrumentally disguised ruling values*, which impose themselves with the greatest ease on the overwhelming majority of the subaltern classes as the 'common sense of the age'.

On another plane, such periods of sustained stability tend to produce functionalist and structuralist types of intellectual syntheses, often successfully penetrating into the ranks of the ruling ideology's potential antagonist, as the strange vicissitudes of 'Marxist structuralism'⁴ demonstrated not so long ago both in Europe and in Latin America, under circumstances which greatly favoured capital and compelled its adversary to adopt a *defensive* posture.

Inevitably, therefore, the appearance of a coherent, all-embracing social alternative (i.e. what may be rightfully termed a 'hegemonic alternative') involves directly challenging the anti-historically articulated claims to 'rational functionality' and 'natural organicity' of the historically prevailing social metabolism. At the same time, it also involves a defiant critical assault on the formerly veiled sets of values from which the established modality of social metabolism is in fact structurally inseparable. This open contestation of the ruling values, together with their functional/instrumental equivalents, is necessary in order to establish the credentials of the alternative framework with regard to all dimensions of social life, from the most limited practical functions of material interchange to those which require the comprehensive restructuring of the complex network of value-production and reproduction.

4 Structuralism in general had its hey-day in the postwar period of economic expansion and consensus politics. Thus, at the time of its confident intellectual empire-building it could happily welcome the spread of its influence even in the form of 'Marxist structuralism', notwithstanding the profound incompatibility between historical materialism and anti-historical structuralism. In the same way, it is highly revealing that 'Marxist structuralism' had its greatest success in Latin America; a continent dominated in those days by various military regimes that forced the left into an understandably defensive position. And the obverse side of this relationship prevailed as well. For once the crisis of capital was signaled by the end of the 'economic miracles' (both in Europe and in Latin America), coupled with the reactivation and intensification of social antagonisms — in Europe in the form of the collapse of consensus-politics and in Latin America through the demise of several military dictatorships —, we could also witness the complete disintegration not only of mainstream structuralism but also of 'Marxist structuralism' as an intellectual force.

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4. IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF METHODOLOGICAL DUALISM

AS an example, let us consider the profound interconnection between the apparently 'strictly technical' laws of the established mode of production and the underlying, clearly value-laden, social determinations of the same system. To quote Marx:

The rule, that the labour-time expended on a commodity should not exceed that which is socially necessary for its production, appears, in the production of commodities generally, to be established by the mere effect of competition; since, to express ourselves superficially, each single producer is obliged to sell his commodity at its market-price. In Manufacture, on the contrary, the turning out of a given quantum of product in a given time is a *technical law* of the process of production itself.⁵

However, to stop at this point would - and in the eyes of those who identify themselves with the 'standpoint of political economy' in fact *does* - carry with it the acceptance of 'the absurd fable of Menenius Agrippa, which *makes man a mere fragment of his own body*',⁶ on account of its undeniable practical

⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, p.345.

⁶ Ibid., p.360.

Early capitalist developments create 'a productive mechanism whose parts are human beings'. (Ibid., p.338.) In the manufacture period, 'the handicraft continues to be the basis. ... It is just because handicraft skill continues, in this way, to be the foundation of the process of production, that each workman becomes exclusively assigned to a partial function, and that for the rest of his life, his labour-power is turned into the organ of this detail function.' (Ibid., pp.338-9.)

Yet, it would be quite wrong to ignore the natural and historical foundations on which such developments arise, seeing in them something uniquely capitalistic, as we find this in the Weberian quasi-mystical (as well as question-begging) deduction of 'life-calling' from the 'spirit of capitalism' (and vice-versa).

There is a much more tangible grounding to all such developments than the 'spirit of capitalism' which Weber needs in order to provide a 'refutation' of the Marxian account. (We may note here in passing that even his admirers admit that 'Weber has made his academic reputation by attacking Marxist determinism's economic reductionism'. Ephraim Fischhoff, 'The Background and Fate of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*', in Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Translated by E. Fischhoff, Introduction by Talcott Parsons, Methuen & Co., London, 1965, p.282.)

realization as the totally dehumanizing technical law of the capitalist workshop in which 'Not only is the detail work distributed to the different individuals, but the individual himself is made the automatic motor of a fractional operation'.⁷

In reality, of course, the technical articulation of production is only the *end-result* of a long historical process which involves the radical (and in its human aspects extremely brutal)⁸ *overthrow* of formerly established productive

As Marx rightly stresses: 'the conversion of fractional work into the life-calling of one man, corresponds to the tendency shown by earlier societies, to make trades hereditary; either to petrify them into castes, or whenever definite historical conditions beget in the individual a tendency to vary in a manner incompatible with the nature of castes, to ossify them into guilds. Castes and guilds arise from the action of the same natural law that regulates the differentiation of plants and animals into species and varieties, except that, when a certain degree of development has been reached, the heredity of castes and the exclusiveness of guilds are ordained as a law of society. "The muslins of Dakka in fineness, the calicoes and other piece goods of Coromandel in brilliant and durable colours, have never been surpassed. Yet they are produced without capital, machinery, division of labour, or any of those means which give such facilities to the manufacturing interest of Europe. ..." [*Historical and Descriptive Account of British India*, by Hugh Murray and James Wilson, &c., Edinburgh, 1832, vol. II, p.449.] It is only the special skill accumulated from generation to generation, and transmitted from father to son, that gives to the Hindu, as it does to the spider, this proficiency.' (Marx, *Ibid.*, pp.339-40.)

What is specific about early capitalist developments is not the operation of some economic forces in accordance with the regulative principle of 'life-calling', — let alone the mysterious emergence of the latter as a self-sustaining 'ethos' from the 'protestant spirit of capitalism'. As a matter of fact, the allegedly demiurgic 'spirit of capitalism' was preceded, as far as 'life-calling' was concerned, by thousands of years of well established, and often even legally enforced, material practices in different parts of the world, some of which at least must have been known to Weber. Rather, the innovatory contribution of these developments consists in the confinement of the worker's attention to a fractional operation, on very sound (even if profoundly dehumanizing) economic grounds which favour the full unfolding of the capitalistic division of labour. For, as Marx points out in continuation of our last quote:

'And yet, the work of such a Hindu weaver is very complicated, compared with that of a manufacturing labourer. An artificer who performs one after another the various fractional operations in the production of a finished article, must at one time change his place, at another his tools. The transition from one operation to another interrupts the flow of his labour, and creates, so to say, gaps in his working-day. These gaps close up so soon as he is tied to one and the same operation all day long; they vanish in proportion as the changes in his work diminish.' *Ibid.*, pp.340-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.360. And Marx adds here in a footnote: 'Dugald Stewart calls manufacturing labourers "living automatons ... employed in the details of the work".'

⁸ As Marx puts it:

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Primitive accumulation plays in Political Economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote about the past. In times long gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent and above all frugal élite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. ... Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort finally had nothing to sell except their own skins. ... Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in the defence of property. ... In actual history, it is a notorious fact that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, in short, force, play the greatest part. In the tender annals of political economy, the idyllic reigns from time immemorial. Right and “labour” were from the beginning of time the sole means of enrichment, the present year of course always excepted. As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic. ...

The proletariat created by the breaking-up of the bands of feudal retainers and by the forcible expropriation of the people from the soil, this “free” [vogelfrei, i.e. ‘free as a bird’] proletariat could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world. On the other hand, these men, suddenly dragged from their wonted mode of life, could not as suddenly adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition. They were turned en masse into beggars, robbers and vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases from stress of circumstances. Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th centuries, throughout Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage. The fathers of the present working-class were chastised for their enforced transformation into vagabonds and paupers. Legislation treated them as “voluntary” criminals, and assumed that it depended on their own good will to go on working under the old conditions which in fact no longer existed.

In England this legislation began under Henry VII.

Henry VIII. 1530: Beggars old and unable to work receive a beggar's license. On the other hand, whipping and imprisonment for sturdy vagabonds. They are to be tied to the cart-tail and whipped until the blood streams from their bodies, then they are to swear on oath to go back to their birthplace or to where they have lived the last three years and to “put themselves to labour”. What grim irony! In 27 Henry VIII. the former statute is repeated, but strengthened with new clauses. For the second arrest for vagabondage the whipping is to be repeated and half the ear sliced off; but for the third relapse the offender is to be executed as ^{a hardened criminal and enemy of the common weal.}

Edward VI.: A statute of the first year of his reign, 1547, ordains that if anyone refuses to work, he shall be condemned as a slave to the person who has denounced him as an idler. The master shall feed his slave on bread and water, weak broth and such refuse meat as he thinks fit. He has the right to force him to do any work, no matter how disgusting, with whip and chains. If the slave is absent for a fortnight, he is condemned to slavery for life and is to be branded on forehead or back with the letter S; if he runs away thrice, he is to be executed as a felon. ...

Out of the poor fugitives, of whom Thomas More says that they were forced to thieve, “72,000 great and petty thieves were put to death,” in the reign of Henry VIII. [Holinshead, Description of England, Vol.1, p.186.] In Elizabeth's time, “rogues were trussed up apace, and there was not one year commonly wherein three or four hundred were not devoured and eaten up by the gallows” [Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion, and Other Various Occurrences in the Church of England during Queen Elizabeth's Reign*, 2nd ed., 1725, Vol. 2]. According to this same Strype, in Somersetshire alone in one year 40 persons were executed, 35 robbers burnt in the hand,

37 whipped and 183 discharged as “incorrigible vagabonds”. Nevertheless, he is of the opinion that this large number of prisoners does not comprise “even a fifth of the actual criminals, thanks to the negligence of the justices and the foolish compassion of the people”, and that the other counties of England were not better off in this respect than Somersetshire, while some were even worse off.’ (Marx, *Ibid.*, pp.713-4, & 734-6.)

In the last decades of the 17th century, in accordance with capital's standpoint of political economy, the great idol of modern liberalism: John Locke — an absentee landowner in Somersetshire as well as a highly paid Government official — preaches the same ‘insipid childishness’ described by Marx. He insists that the cause of ‘The growth of the poor ... can be nothing else but the relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners; virtue and industry being as constant companions on one side as vice and idleness are on the other. The first step, therefore, towards the setting of the poor on work ... ought to be a restraint of their debauchery by a strict execution of the laws provided against it [by Henry VIII. and Edward VI.]’. (Locke, ‘Memorandum on the Reform of the Poor Law’, in H.R. Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, King, London, 1876, Vol. 2, p.378.)

Receiving annually the near astronomical remuneration of around £1,500 for his services to Government (as a Commissioner at the Board of Trade: one of his several offices), Locke does not hesitate to praise the prospect of the poor earning ‘a penny per diem’ (*Ibid.*, p.383.), i.e., a sum approximately 1,000 times lower than his own income from one of his governmental offices, which he takes, of course, for wholly justified. Not surprisingly, therefore, ‘The value of his estate at death — nearly £20,000, of which £12,000 was in cash — was comparable to that of a well-to-do London merchant.’ (Neal Wood, *The Politics of Locke's Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p.26.) Quite an achievement for someone whose principal source of revenue is milking the — admittedly more than willing — state!

Moreover, being a true gentleman, with a very high stake to protect, he also wants to regulate the movements of the poor through the draconian measure of passes, proposing:

‘That all men begging in maritime counties without passes, that are maimed or above fifty years of age, and all of any age so begging without passes in inland counties nowhere bordering on the sea, shall be sent to the next house of correction, there to be kept at hard labour for three years.’ (Locke, ‘Memorandum on the Reform of the Poor Law’, *Op.cit.*, p.380.)

And while the brutal laws of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. just referred to wanted to slice off only ‘half the ear’ of the second offenders, our great liberal philosopher and state official — one of the leading figures of early English Enlightenment — suggests an improvement on such laws by solemnly recommending the loss of both ears, to be administered already to first offenders. These are his words:

‘That whoever shall counterfeit a pass shall lose his ears for the forgery the first time that he is found guilty thereof, and the second time that he shall be transported to the plantations [to become a slave there], as in case of felony.’ (*Ibid.*)

At the same time, in his ‘Memorandum on the Reform of the Poor Law’ Locke also proposes the institution of workhouses for the children of the poor from a very early age, arguing that:

‘The children of labouring people are an ordinary burden to the parish, and are usually maintained in idleness, so that their labour also is generally lost to the public till they are twelve or fourteen years old.

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practices, together with all their corresponding 'technical laws'; the *forcible separation* of human productive activity (labour) from the conditions of its exercise (the means of production), as mentioned above; the callous exploitation

The most effectual remedy for this that we are able to conceive, and which we therefore humbly propose, is, that, in the fore-mentioned new law to be enacted, it be further provided that working schools be set up in every parish, to which the children of all such as demand relief of the parish, above three and under fourteen years of age ... shall be obliged to come.' (Ibid., p.383.)

Locke's chief concern is how to combine severe work discipline and religious indoctrination with the maximum of economy. He follows Edward VI.'s guidance on how the slave-master 'shall feed his slave on bread and water, weak broth and such refuse meat as he thinks fit', with one significant difference, in that he removes even 'refuse meat' from his royal example's miserly list:

'If therefore care be taken that they [the children] have each of them belly-full of bread daily at school, they will be in no danger of famishing, but, on the contrary, they will be healthier and stronger than those who are bred otherwise. Nor will this practice cost the overseers any trouble; for a baker may be agreed with to furnish and bring into the school-house every day the allowance of bread necessary for all the scholars that are there. And to this may be also added, without any trouble, in cold weather, if it be thought needful, a little warm water-gruel; for the same fire that warms the room may be made use of to boil a pot of it.

Another advantage also of bringing children thus to a working school is that by this means they may be obliged to come constantly to church every Sunday, along with their schoolmasters or dames, whereby they may be brought into some sense of religion; whereas ordinarily now, in their idle and loose way of breeding up, they are as utter strangers both to religion and morality as they are to industry.' (Ibid., pp.384-5.)

Thus, the measures that had to be applied to the 'labouring poor' were radically different from those which the 'men of enlightenment' considered suitable for themselves. In the end it all boiled down to naked power relations, enforced with utmost brutality and violence in the course of early capitalist developments, irrespective of how they were later rationalized in the 'tender annals of political economy'.

Naturally, the idea that the growth of the poor and unemployed has its cause in the 'relaxation of discipline and corruption of manners', and that people's inability to find work is to be attributed to the absence of 'their own good will', can never be abandoned by the representatives of capital. The British Tory Minister of Employment a few years ago advised more than three million unemployed to get on their bikes (which they could not afford to buy) and look for a job (i.e. to look for 'the old conditions that no longer existed'). This advice was later followed by government regulations implementing savage cuts in Social Security benefits and in State Pension funds. And Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government introduced yet another measure of which even John Locke (though perhaps not Henry VIII.) would have been proud. The measure in question was designed to compel the unemployed young to move on in search of (non-existent) work-opportunities after two weeks of staying in one place on the 'Costa del Dole'. The idea that one should also 'slice off the ears' of first offenders has not yet been revived, as far as I know.

and disregard of even the *natural substratum* of human existence,⁹ in direct

9 One of the most important aspects of this problem is that generalized commodity production ruthlessly exploits even the natural propensities of human existence, in that with the development of the capitalist workshop:

‘Not only have we here an increase in the productive power of the individual, by means of co-operation, but the creation of a new power, namely, the collective power of masses. Apart from the new power that arises from the fusion of many forces into one single force, mere social contact begets in most industries an emulation and a stimulation of animal spirits that heighten the efficiency of each individual workman. Hence it is that a dozen persons working together will, in their collective working-day of 144 hours, produce far more than twelve isolated men each working 12 hours, or than one man who works twelve days in succession. The reason of this is that man is, if not as Aristotle contends, a political, at all events a social animal.’ (Marx, *Ibid.*, p.326.)

What we are concerned with here is not simply a specific social relationship, but one which simultaneously also manifests the individual's inherent connection with the human species. For:

‘... the special productive power of the combined working-day is, under all circumstances, the social productive power of labour, or the productive power of social labour. This power is due to co-operation itself. When the labourer co-operates systematically with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species.’ (*Ibid.*, p.329.)

However, since the whole process must be subordinated under capitalism to the imperatives of self-expanding exchange-value, the positive achievements of developing the productive powers of the species are inevitably contradicted by the inhuman impact of the adopted work practices on the individual producers. For ‘constant labour of one uniform kind disturbs the intensity and flow of man's animal spirits, which find recreation and delight in mere change of activity.’ (*Ibid.*, p.341.)

Further: the intellectual faculties of the workers are equally badly affected as a result of the capitalistic division of labour, involving not simply technical ‘specialization’, but both the systematic divorce of their powers of control from the labourers, and the lining up of these powers against them.

To quote Marx:

‘The knowledge, the judgement, and the will, which, though in ever so small a degree, are practiced by the independent peasant or handicrafts-man, in the same way as the savage makes the whole art of war consist in the exercise of his personal cunning — these faculties are now required only for the workshop as a whole. Intelligence in production expands in one direction, because it vanishes in many others. What is lost by the detail labourers, is concentrated in the capital that employs them. It is a result of the division of labour in manufactures, that the labourer is brought face to face with the intellectual potencies of the material process of production, as the property of another and as a ruling power. This separation begins in simple co-operation, where the capitalist represents to the single workman, the oneness and the will of the associated labour. It is developed in manufacture which cuts down the labourer into a detail labourer. It is completed in modern industry, which makes science a productive force distinct from labour and presses it into the service of capital. (‘The man of knowledge and the productive labourer come to be widely divided from each other, and knowledge, instead of remaining the handmaid of labour in the hand of the labourer to increase his productive powers ... has almost everywhere arrayed itself against labour ... systematically deluding and leading them [the labourers] astray in order to render their muscular powers entirely mechanical and

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subordination to the reifying requirements of a determinate mode of production; and the imposition of a new system of values, with a *hierarchical and despotic* regulation of the production process itself, embodied in a *global* system of *domination and exploitation*, which rules every single aspect of life under the system of generalized commodity production, from the directly material exchange-relations to the most mediated intellectual and artistic pursuits.

Furthermore, the smooth running and the economically viable ('rationally efficacious' and 'calculable') *continuity* of capitalist production, in accordance with its 'technical laws', is inconceivable without the *constant* reproduction of *all* these presuppositions - at whatever cost - under the ultimate supervisory power of the *capitalist state*. This remains true even if the unashamedly violent modalities of direct state intervention in the exercise of society's reproductive functions need not surface without the pressure of all-embracing structural crises. As historical experience shows, however, they come to the fore with predictable regularity whenever the vital practical presuppositions of the ruling socio-economic order are themselves endangered. Thus, significantly, under the circumstances of fundamental crises it becomes necessary to cast aside the otherwise much more convenient regulatory devices of 'liberal' ideology'.¹⁰

obedient.' "W. Thompson, *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth*, London, 1824, p.274.)

"In manufacture, in order to make the collective labourer, and through him capital, rich in social productive power, each labourer must be made poor in individual productive powers. 'Ignorance is the mother of industry as well as of superstition. Reflection and fancy are subject to err; but habit of moving the hand or the foot is independent of either. Manufactures, accordingly, prosper most where the mind is least consulted, and where the workshop may be considered as an engine, the parts of which are men.' (Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Edinburgh, 1767, p.280.) As a matter of fact, some few manufacturers in the middle of the 18th century preferred, for certain operations that were trade secrets, to employ half-idiotic persons."(J.D. Tuckett, 'A History of the Past and Present State of the Labouring Population', London, 1846. Marx, *Ibid.*, pp.361-2.)

Thus, the alienating requirements of the capitalistic production process prevail even against spontaneous natural inclination, nullifying the objective possibilities of the many-sided development of the human faculties, in the interest of maintaining the stranglehold of capital's mode of control over society as a whole.

10 Tragtenberg rightly stresses the liberal/social-democratic ancestry of authoritarian corporatism, all the way down to Nazism: 'A teoria da empresa-instituição desenvolveu-se na Alemanha, sob Weimar, com Rathenau e Neumann, sendo depois adotada pelo nazismo, que reconheceu a importância político-social da empresa.' (Mauricio Tragtenberg, *Administração, Poder e Ideologia*, Editora Moraes, São Paulo, 1980, pp.13-4.)

They are replaced by 'states of emergency' whose declared purpose is the reconstitution of the formerly prevailing conditions of capitalist 'normality', arbitrarily equated with 'law and order' as such.

THUS, the acceptance of the technical laws of capitalist production at their face value, as 'purely technical laws', or, analogously, the postulation of the 'technical reasoning' and 'instrumental rationality' of commodity production, on the arbitrary assumption of a 'strictly economic sphere' (which is by definition exempted from historical qualifications and, of course, contradictions), is extremely problematical, to say the least.

Of necessity, such an approach produces systematically distorted conceptualizations, in conformity to the ideological interests that circumscribe the social horizon of the philosophers involved. For, an adequate understanding of the true nature and relative economic viability of the technical laws themselves requires situating them within the *unified* framework of the social production and reproduction process, with all its presuppositions and axiological determinations. The ability to do so, however, necessitates in its turn the adoption of a critical vantage point from which the ongoing unification of the heterogeneous and antagonistic social determinations into a viable *social* organism first becomes visible.

Naturally, the latter is inconceivable without the simultaneous identification of the structural *and historical* limits of the given mode of practical unification, as opposed to its long established ideological misrepresentation as a 'natural organism'. By contrast, the various dualistic approaches articulated by the philosophical tradition with which we are concerned depict these relationships in a most disconcerting way. For they superimpose on the complex unity and practical inseparability of the axiological and functional dimensions an apriori scheme of some sort.

We should also recall here the complete consonance of Max Weber's Bonapartist views on 'democracy' and its 'Leader' with those of General Ludendorff, one of Hitler's earliest champions. For an insightful analysis of the relationship between big business and dictatorial developments in Brazil see Octavio Ianni, *A Ditadura do Grande Capital, Civilização Brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro, 1981.

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Such schemes are meant to establish the *insurmountable* nature of the identified dichotomies, for the purpose of transferring the question of value to an independent, self-contained 'realm'. And in this respect it does not really matter that some of the philosophers who engage in these practices do not actually *call* their apriori construct by its proper name, in contrast to Kant, for instance. For they stipulate, nonetheless, the untranscendable separation of social value and technical functionality on the ground of aprioristic assumptions.

- Accordingly, behind the *methodological dualism* that divorces the historically given *end-result* from its necessary practical *premises*, we find the more or less conscious *ideological intent* characterized by Marx as the 'eternalization of the established relations of production'.
- Compartmentalizing the world of experience the way in which methodological dualism does - i.e., by *divorcing the historically established and constantly reproduced presuppositions of the system from its fictitiously atemporal structural articulation*, thus arbitrarily reducing everything to its *present functionality* -, blocks out from view the system's vulnerable strategic core against which a radical challenge must be mounted by the social adversary. If, that is, the latter is to have any hope at all of asserting its own vision as a viable practical alternative, coherently spelled out in all its major aspects, from the directly axiological determinations to the corresponding 'technical' dimensions.
- However, the methodological dualism of separating the given from its practical presuppositions renders another very important service as well to the ruling ideology. For, thanks to the institutionally secured ability of the latter to impose its own (unmentioned) presuppositions on theoretical debate, the substantive issues of social conflict are transformed into matters of 'purely methodological' concern, since the *dualistic compartmentalization* is *ipso facto* also an ideologically motivated *reduction*.
- As a result, the advocacy of the new, contesting set of values is in principle deprived of the ground in relation to which it could be considered representative of a veritable social alternative, to be contested as such, in substantive terms. In other words, it is apriori deprived of any 'operational' or 'functional' significance in virtue of the dominant ideological discourse's automatic refusal to recognize (within the imposed

matrix of dualistic/reductive categorizations) the legitimacy of the contestant's critical posture vis-à-vis the 'strictly economic', etc. 'realm'.

Thanks to the successful imposition of such methodological premises, the values and corresponding social strategies in question can be debated no end with reference to a separate 'value-realm' and its 'practical reason', methodologically counter posing the latter to the 'realm of facts', to the world of 'technical/administrative/instrumental rationality', etc., but the outcome by definition cannot affect the 'realm of is'. And in the meantime, of course, the necessary practical presuppositions of the ruling order can be reproduced in the course of capital's enlarged self-reproduction, undisturbed even by the possibility of theoretical question marks over the fate of the established relations of production.

5. THE INWARD-ORIENTED SUBJECT OF PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE

NATURALLY, the methodological dualism which results from the socially determined separation of the given from its necessary presuppositions, and the concomitant postulation of dichotomies and antithetical 'realms' (not to forget the fetishistic hypostatization of mutually opposed human 'faculties' - like the 'faculty of theoretical reason' as against that of 'practical reason' - to match the self-contained character of the postulated realms), must be directly related to all the other methodological characteristics of this tradition. For they happen to constitute a closely interlocking system in which the various parts not merely are compatible with, but also reciprocally reinforce one another, even if they do so in a contradictory fashion, in keeping with the very nature of capital as 'the living contradiction' (Marx).

We can better appreciate this by reminding ourselves of some closely related points.

Accordingly, 'the standpoint of isolated individuality' is very far from being a philosophical blessing even in the eyes of its adherents. It is most ironical that the solution adopted by both the materialist and the idealist philosophers of this tradition, in order to surmount the contradictions of the 'stand point of the

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isolated individual', creates many more problems than it can resolve. For their hypostatization of a generic 'human nature' in which the individuals partake as 'genus-individuals', instead of constituting a viable answer to the problems that generated the need for this hypostatization in the first place, only intensifies their dilemmas.

What happens, in fact, is that predicating the direct 'organic' relationship between the egotistic/isolated individual and the human species merely *displaces* the original difficulties to other areas. As a result, the thinkers who share the standpoint of isolated individuality are presented with mysteries of their own making from which they cannot extricate themselves.

These mysteries confront them wherever they look, as evidenced by the way in which they tackle all major issues of philosophy, from their inquiry into the nature of knowledge to the opposition they set up between 'subject' and 'object', the 'particular' and the 'universal', 'appearance' and 'essence', 'fact' and 'value', 'theoretical' and 'practical' philosophy, 'for-itself' and 'in-itself', and the like. The irony is that their genuine but quite hopeless attempt to bring to a common denominator isolated individuality and the human species, in accordance with capital's standpoint of political economy, only reproduces the objects of their initial perplexity with a vengeance, in the form of a forbidding range of dichotomies, dilemmas and paradoxes whose resolution remains, of necessity, beyond their reach.

The untranscendable dualism is present, right from the Cartesian beginnings, in the way in which the issues themselves are perceived and defined in relation to the philosophical 'Subject'. For the immanent complexities of social practice (concerned in the real world with the realization of tangible objectives) are transformed into mystifying, and at the level of isolated subjectivity absolutely insoluble, theoretical riddles. Also, the more extensively capital's power unfolds and consolidates itself, bringing under its control the social metabolism in its entirety, the more the philosophical conceptualizations of universally reifying commodity production by the representatives of this tradition tend to reduce everything to the question: 'how can cognition as such get beyond its subjective immediacy and reach its object'.

Moreover, they impose upon themselves two hopelessly constraining conditions, which in the end guarantee the failure of their epistemological quest.

First - with the exception of a handful of philosophers whose example only strengthens the rule - by conceiving the subject as the self-referential inwardness of the *ego*, even if under a number of different names.

And second, by stipulating for all (including themselves) a scholastic, and ultimately solipsistic, rule, according to which the task imposed upon the subjectivity of cognitive consciousness with regard to its object must be accomplished 'rigorously within the sphere of immanence'.

- Thus, paradoxically, the world of capitalist reification, which is *de facto* impenetrable from the point of view of isolated individuality, produces the alienated Subject of philosophical discourse.
- This 'Subject' is an abstract, speculative, and to a large extent arbitrary philosophical construct, derived by way of the systematic and *reductive obliteration* of the social characteristics of all real individual subjects.
- Considered in relation to the philosophical problematic of which this inward-orientated Subject is supposed to be the bearer, the principal function of its constitution is to reinforce the impression of impenetrability and uncontrollability, changing the ontological status of alienated and reified existence from *de facto* to *de jure*, as if it *could not be otherwise*.

This ideologically crucial shift from *de facto* to *de jure* is achieved by declaring the manifold *actual* dualisms of the prevailing mode of production - to which we shall return in a moment - perfectly to correspond to the postulated dualistic 'ontological structure' of 'authentic being'. For nothing could legitimate and eternalize the given social order with greater ideological efficacy than its claimed supra-historical identity with the absolute ontological determinations of being itself.

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6. FROM 'UNRECONCILED DUALISM' TO DUALISM OF RECONCILIATION

THE merit for the most remarkable attempt to overcome the dichotomies of this tradition within the constraints of its social horizons belongs, again, to Hegel.

Indeed, in some respects he produces lasting solutions to some of the dichotomies of his predecessors, as demonstrated by his biting critique of Kant, for instance. As Lukács recalls, 'Hegel pours scorn in a number of places on Kant's "soul-sack" in which the different "faculties" (theoretical, practical, etc.) are lying and from which they have to be "pulled out".'¹¹

Equally, Hegel is very critical of Solger's inconsistency and ultimate failure to carry out his promised philosophical programme, in that Solger remains trapped within 'unreconciled dualism' despite his explicit intention to go beyond it.¹²

Furthermore, Hegel clearly perceives that the rigid opposition of 'Intelligence' to 'Will', and the corresponding dualism of 'is' and 'ought' leads to what he calls 'bewildering contradictions'. For:

While Intelligence merely proposes to take the world *as it is*, Will takes steps to make the world what it *ought to be*. Will looks upon the immediate and given present, not as solid being, but as mere semblance without reality. It is here that we meet those *contradictions* that are so *bewildering* from the standpoint of *abstract morality*. This position in its 'practical' bearings is the one taken by the philosophy of Kant, and even by that of Fichte. The Good, say these writers, has to be realized: we have to work in order to produce it: and Will is only the Good actualizing itself. If the world, then, were as it ought to be, the *action of Will would*

¹¹ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p.140.

¹² 'Solger fängt mit einer unversöhnten Dualismus an, obwohl seine ausdrückliche Bestimmung der Philosophie ist, nicht in einem Dualismus befangen zu sein.' Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke*, Jub. Ausgabe, Vol. 20, p.169.

*be at an end. The Will itself therefore requires that its End should not be realized.*¹³

However, in the end the Hegelian way of resolving the identified contradictions turns out to be no solution at all. For it merely transfers the - rightly criticized - dualisms from one plane to another, reproducing even the ought-ridden character of the overall approach of his philosophical predecessors in the form of his own ideal postulates. This is how Hegel argues his case:

[I]t is the process of Will itself, which abolishes finitude and the contradiction it involves. The *reconciliation* is achieved when Will in its result *returns to the presupposition* made by *cognition*. In other words, it consists in the *unity* of the theoretical and practical *idea*. Will knows the end to be its own, and Intelligence apprehends the world as the notion actual. This is the *right attitude* of rational cognition. Nullity and *transitoriness* constitute only the *superficial features* and not the *real essence* of the world. ... All *unsatisfied endeavour* ceases, when we recognize that the *final purpose* of the world is accomplished no less than ever accomplishing itself. Generally speaking, this is the *man's way of looking*; while the *young imagine* that the world is utterly sunk in *wickedness*, and that the first thing needful is a *thorough transformation*.¹⁴

Thus, in place of '*unreconciled dualism*' we end up with a peculiar *dualism of reconciliation*, which explicitly rejects the possibility of a *thorough transformation* of the world as contrary to the '*final purpose*' and '*real essence* of the world'. This apologetic Hegelian dualism locates '*superficial features*' and '*transitoriness*' (Hegel's categories directed against all those who have the temerity of acknowledging the need for a thorough transformation of the existent) on one side, and the '*real essence*' (corresponding to the reconciliatory '*right attitude of rational cognition*' towards what Hegel himself is forced to admit to be '*unsatisfied endeavours*', which he nevertheless wants us to consider adequately and satisfactorily accomplished) on the other.

It is highly significant that this Hegelian solution bolsters up its claims to

¹³ Hegel, *Logic: Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part I*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975, p.291.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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rationality by arbitrarily declaring that what it finds socially unacceptable belongs to the domain of 'youthful imagination', whereas the resignatory complicity with the *actual diremptions and contradictions* of real life qualifies in its perverse terms for the maturity and dignity of 'the man's way of looking' at the world in its essentiality. This is the same pseudo-solution and dissolution of the problem which we find in Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* where he declares that 'the man' (as opposed, again, to the youth):

must recognize the world as a *self-dependent* world, which in its *essential* nature is already complete, *must accept the conditions* set for him by the world and wrest from it what he wants for himself. As a rule, the man believes that this *submission* is only forced on him by necessity. But, in truth, this *unity* with the world *must* be recognized, not as a relation imposed by necessity, but as *the rational*. The rational, the divine, possesses the absolute power to actualize itself and has, *right from the beginning, fulfilled itself; ...* The world is this actualization of divine Reason; it is only *on its surface* that the *play of contingency* prevails.¹⁵

The advocated 'unity with the world' is, thus, an empty *postulate* — a speculatively transfigured 'ought' — and a thoroughly conservative one at that. For such 'ought' preserves and idealizes the established world, despite its more or less openly admitted contradictions, as 'in its essential nature already complete'. Moreover, in the spirit of the Hegelian reconciliatory dualism, it is also declared that the postulated 'completeness' of the world's 'essential nature' corresponds with full adequacy to 'the rational', in opposition to the misconceptions of all those who fix their eyes merely on the 'surface play of contingency'. And the aprioristic construct of 'mature man versus impatient emotional youth' - which is devised in order to suit the Hegelian conception of *rationality as resignation* - reproduces the dualism inherent in the standpoint of capital's political economy even on the plane of anthropology, attempting to escape from the newly created difficulty by postulating at the same time the earlier discussed 'process of the *genus* with the *individual*'.¹⁶ No wonder, therefore, that Hegel's solutions with regard to dualism and dichotomies remain at the level of partial negations of Kant, Fichte, Solger and others, reproducing,

¹⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p.62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.64

even if in characteristically Hegelian terms, the same contradictions which he tries to leave behind.

ADMITTEDLY, the Hegelian solutions are formulated from a relatively higher vantage point than those of his predecessors. Nonetheless, his system exhibits the historical limitations of their shared social orientation and conceptual framework in an even more striking form, due to the more open manifestation of the fundamental social antagonism between capital and labour in his age than at an earlier stage of development.

We can witness the reappearance of the common methodological and ideological parameters of the standpoint of political economy in that Hegel can accomplish no more than a pseudo-transcendence of the identified, and partially criticized, dichotomies and dualistic oppositions, in the purely speculative realm of the Notion. But even more revealing is in this respect the dualistic framework of his entire philosophical system in which the logico/deductive *categories* are superimposed on the *actuality* of the historical world, liquidating in the end their historicity.

Nor should it come as a surprise that Hegel's curious 'dualism *malgré lui*' - i.e., one that is all the more revealing precisely because often it asserts itself against the philosopher's explicit intentions - is just as pronounced in the Hegelian theory of the state as in his *Science of Logic* and in *The Philosophy of History*. Accordingly, the dualistic opposition between 'civil society' and the 'State' which we are offered in the Hegelian *Philosophy of Right*, with its thoroughly ought-ridden 'resolution' of the antagonisms of Civil Society through the subsumption of the latter under the idealized State, reproduces the same determinations that shape the conceptions of all major intellectual figures of the epoch. Thus, Marx's critique of the 'mystical dualism' of the Hegelian solutions identifies an important methodological characteristic, which is inseparable from the legitimating ideological intent common to all those who share capital's standpoint of political economy.

The Hegelian 'opposition of *in-itself* and *for-itself*, of consciousness and self-consciousness, of *object* and *subject* ... is the opposition, within thought itself,

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between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness.¹⁷ Thanks to such conceptualization of the dichotomies, the contradictions of real life - inherent in capital's unyielding power of alienation - can be both acknowledged (for a fleeting moment) and made permanently to disappear through their 'appropriating' reduction into abstract 'thought entities'. This reduction carries with it, of course, the ideologically motivated elimination of their *social determinateness*. To quote Marx:

[T]he appropriation of what is estranged and objective, or the annulling of objectivity in the form of *estrangement* (which has to advance from indifferent foreignness to real, antagonistic estrangement) means equally or even primarily for Hegel that it is *objectivity* which is to be annulled, because it is not the *determinate* character of the object, but rather its *objective* character that is offensive and constitutes estrangement for self-consciousness. ... A peculiar role, therefore, is played by the act of *superseding* in which denial and preservation - denial and affirmation - are bound together. Thus, for example, in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, *Private Right* superseded equals *Morality*, *Morality* superseded equals the *Family*, the *Family* superseded equals *Civil Society*, *Civil Society* superseded equals the *State*, the *State* superseded equals *World History*. In the *actual world* private right, morality, the family, civil society, the state, etc., remain in existence, only they have become ... moments of motion.¹⁸

It is, thus, Hegel's ambivalent attitude to the antagonisms of the actual world - his perception of their significance from capital's standpoint of political economy, coupled with an idealist refusal to acknowledge their untranscendable negative implications for the given order in the framework of the unfolding historical development - which is responsible for producing this curious 'philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world'.¹⁹

Witnessing the appearance of a social agency which contests the structurally enforced domination of its being by private property, Hegel is too great a thinker simply to ignore the potential explosiveness of the basic social antagonisms in the historical process of which he is a most acute observer and interpreter. Nor

17 Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p.149. Marx's emphases

18 Ibid., pp.159-62. Marx's emphases.

19 Ibid., p.150.

can Hegel envisage, however, a world from which the structural dominance of private property could actually disappear. Hence his transformation of the dichotomies of real life into 'thought entities' in terms of which the desired reconciliatory pseudo-transcendence can be accomplished. Accordingly, '*Private Property* as a *thought* is transcended in the *thought* of morality.' An intellectual strategy that Hegel can pursue untroubled because 'this superseding *leaves its object standing* in the real world'.²⁰

7. MORALIZING APRIORISM IN THE SERVICE OF THE 'COMMERCIAL SPIRIT'

ANOTHER revealing aspect of the ubiquitous dualism and dichotomies is the radical transformation of moral discourse in post-Cartesian philosophy. What we are offered bears no resemblance to the thoroughly realistic categorical framework of Aristotelian Ethics, for instance. In sharp contrast, in the post-Cartesian philosophical universe we are confronted with characteristic bourgeois conceptions of morality of which Kant's Critique of Practical Reason is the supreme - and within the horizons of his class quite unsurpassable - example.

The solutions of such ethics are directly derived from the assumed dualistic conception of being, which in their turn the aprioristically stipulated 'conclusions' circularly underpin, in the spirit of the Kantian 'primacy of Practical Reason'.

Within the parameters of this dualistic ontology, the hypostatized realm of 'ought' represents the *impotent counter-image* of the real world in which, after all, the 'moral intentions' of the idealized individual - who is said to belong to the 'noumenal' or 'intelligible' world as far as the ground of his moral determinations and deliberations is concerned - must find their manifestations in the form of real actions.

Moreover, the dichotomous compartmentalization of being yields very convenient ideological corollaries, in perfect harmony with the standpoint of political economy. For after stipulating, as Kant does, that 'pure *apriori*

²⁰ Ibid., p.163.

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legislating reason has no regard for *empirical* purposes such as are comprised under the general name of happiness',²¹ he can reconcile the most blatant contradictions and inhumanities of real life with the requirements of 'pure *apriori* legislating reason' by insisting that:

The *general equality* of men as subjects in a state coexists quite readily with the *greatest inequality* in degrees of the *possessions* men have... Hence the general equality of men also coexists with *great inequality of specific rights* of which there may be many.²²

Thus the dualistic ontology and the dichotomy between *de facto* and *de jure* derived from it serve a thoroughly apologetic function. For they *legitimate*, in the name of nothing less than 'pure *apriori* legislating reason', the worst iniquities of the '*de facto*' existent (i.e., the hierarchical structural determinations of domination and subordination within the antagonistic *class parameters* of the established order) by declaring their perfect consonance with the lofty imperatives of such 'reason'.

Since, in terms of the practical premises at the roots of such a vision, the contradictions of the real world cannot be done away with but, on the contrary, must be preserved *and justified*, the 'corrective' role of morality must be confined to idealistic exhortations addressed to the individual, with reference to the impotent counter-image of actuality under the rule of 'ought'. And, significantly, in this regard it does not seem to make any difference at all whether the general philosophical framework in which the ought-ridden ethical propositions appear is a materialist or an idealist one. For the untranscendability of the basic social contradictions from the standpoint of political economy produces a *moralizing apriorism* of some kind in all cases, no matter how different the particular systems in other respects.

Adam Smith, for instance, is highly realistic in his grasp of some of the most glaring contradictions of the established order, recognizing that, 'Till there be

21 Kant, 'Theory and Practice: Concerning the Common Saying: This May Be True in Theory But Does Not Apply to Practice', in Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), *Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, Random House, New York, 1949, p.416.

22 Ibid., pp.417-8.

property there can be no government, the very end of which is to secure wealth and to defend the rich from the poor'.²³

Indeed, he does not even shirk from acknowledging that as a result of the irresistibly unfolding 'commercial spirit ... the minds of men are contracted and rendered incapable of elevation. Education is despised, or at least neglected, and heroic spirit is almost utterly extinguished',²⁴ adding to all this what sounds, at least by implication, as a strong indictment of the prevailing iniquitous relations, namely that 'the people who clothe the world are in rags themselves'.²⁵

However, precisely because Smith simultaneously also advocates, with boundless enthusiasm, the universal triumph of the 'commercial spirit', there is nothing he can offer in opposition to the criticized phenomena, except moralistic laments about the 'drunkenness, riot and debauchery' of the working classes whose sons lose in his view 'the benefit of religion, which is a great advantage, not only considered in a pious sense, but as it affords them subject for thought and speculation'.²⁶

Smith cannot extricate himself from the contradiction of wholeheartedly approving the structural foundations of the social order whose negative manifestations he would like to condemn in limited contexts. Thus, he has to resort to aprioristically postulating a number of vague 'natural' determinations - like 'disposition', 'propensity', 'inclination', etc. - in order to explain (or rather: in order to be able to run away from the need to explain) some complex, and from his standpoint totally insoluble, social contradictions. He tells us, in this spirit, that

This *disposition* to admire, and almost to worship, the rich and the powerful, and to despise or, at least, to neglect persons of poor and mean condition, though *necessary both to establish and to maintain the distinction of ranks*

23 Adam Smith, Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue, and Arms, in Herbert W. Schneider (ed.), *Adam Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy*, Hafner Publishing Company, New York, 1948, p.291.

24 Ibid., p.321.

25 Ibid., p.320.

26 Ibid., p.319.

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*and the order of society, is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments.*²⁷

As we can see, Adam Smith's feeble lament about the 'corruption of our moral sentiments' is immediately contradicted and invalidated by the philosopher himself on two counts:

- (1) by asserting that the object of his criticism arises from a natural 'disposition' (hence it is unabatable); and
- (2) by concluding that the guilty disposition in question is in any event *necessary* for the establishment of social hierarchy and for the permanence of the 'order of society' as such.
 - Further still, in case someone might begin to worry about the potential consequences of such moral corruption — which we *cannot* help, nor indeed *should* we attempt to interfere with in the 'empirical world' of the 'commercial spirit' and its practical necessities, even if 'ideally/morally' we *ought* to — Smith reassures us in the same work that 'the sentiments of *moral approbation and disapprobation* are founded on the most vigorous passions of *human nature*, and, though they may be somewhat *warped*, cannot be entirely *perverted*.'²⁸
 - In this way, even if the *form* of moral apriorism, which we find in Smith and others who write in the same idiom, is different from the Kantian variety, its *substance* is exactly the same. Nor is this profound *structural affinity* of the respective philosophical systems - which appear to be diametrically opposed at first sight - really surprising at a closer look. For, in view of their shared standpoint of bourgeois political economy,

²⁷ Adam Smith, 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments', in H.W. Schneider (ed.), op.cit., p.102.

²⁸ Ibid., p.225. This is all the more remarkable since Smith's proposition with regard to the constitution of moral values on the basis of 'our sentiments of moral approbation and disapprobation' is advanced in direct contrast to 'our sentiments concerning beauty of every kind'. For immediately before the lines quoted above, Smith insists that: 'The principles of the imagination, upon which our sense of beauty depends, are of a very nice and delicate nature, and may easily be altered by habit and education'.

the fundamental determinations of the hierarchical social framework - the 'distinction of ranks and the order of society' in Smith's words, and 'the greatest inequality in possessions and specific rights' in Kantian terminology - cannot be seriously questioned by either of them.

As a result, not only must the moral apriorism of all those who accommodate themselves within such horizons be simply *assumed as given* (whether on the ground of an alleged 'human nature' or as a special 'faculty of reason'), but also its role must be defined as a merely ideal opposition to the empirically given which it cannot significantly alter.

THUS, in post-Cartesian conceptions of morality we are presented with a system of '*double book-keeping*': one for the ideal world of 'ought' (where, during the optimistic phase of development of the bourgeoisie in the ascendant, the 'corruption of our moral sentiments' and the 'power of evil' cannot be allowed simply to prevail, either in view of the claimed ultimate incorruptibility of 'human nature' itself, or because 'ought implies can'²⁹, etc.), and the other for serving the prosaic reality of the 'empirical purposes' that emanate from the exploitative determinations of the idealized 'commercial spirit'.

However, the inner contradictions of this approach surface even within its own terms of reference when the moral philosopher - who shares the standpoint of political economy - crosses swords with the political economist proper. They are forced to cross swords not only because they conceptualize different aspects of the same contradictory situation but above all because the solutions advocated in one context cannot be kept in a self-enclosed compartment but reveal their radical incompatibility with the other.

Moreover, ironically at times the moral philosopher and the political economist happen to be one and the same person, as illustrated by the predicament of Adam Smith and Michel Chevalier, for instance. In such cases the ideological

29 A Kantian formula, which asserts, with categorical moral absoluteness, that 'since you ought to do it, you can', no matter how completely incapacitating the conditions which you must encounter in the empirical world.

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edifice of dualistic compartmentalization collapses before our very eyes as soon as we compare the contradictory statements made by the thinkers in question in their different capacities. In this way the standpoint of political economy comes to grief both in moral philosophy and in the field of political economy through displaying its inner contradictions. For, as Marx observes:

It stems from the very nature of estrangement that each sphere applies to me a different and opposite yardstick - ethics one and political economy another; for each is a specific estrangement of man and focuses attention on a particular round of estranged essential activity, and each stands in an estranged relation to the other. Thus M. Michel Chevalier reproaches Ricardo with having abstracted from ethics. But Ricardo is allowing political economy to speak its own language, and if it does not speak ethically, this is not Ricardo's fault. M. Chevalier abstracts from political economy in so far as he moralizes, but he really and *necessarily* abstracts from ethics in so far as he practices political economy. The reference of political economy to ethics ... can only be the reference of the laws of political economy to ethics. If there is no such connection, or if the contrary is rather the case, can Ricardo help it? Besides, the opposition between political economy and ethics is only a sham opposition and just as much no opposition as it is an opposition. All that happens is that *political economy expresses moral laws in its own way.*³⁰

Indeed, political economy necessarily abstracts from ethics so as to be able to express the postulated moral laws in its way, in accord with its own fundamental tenets. But, equally, ethics must abstract from the 'empirical' so as to be able to legitimate the laws of political economy in *its* own way.

In the case of 'double book-keeping' post-Cartesian ethics this curious correlation amounts to maintaining simultaneously both that 'practical reason' (or its empiricist equivalent) is deeply concerned with fundamental moral values (in consonance with the impervertible 'moral sentiments' of 'human nature', or in tune with the 'categorical imperatives' that emanate from the 'noumenal world', etc.), and yet that its high sounding commands do not apply to the task of redressing even the 'greatest inequalities' in the world of 'empirical purposes'.

³⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p.121.

Conveniently, therefore, in the 'realistic' versions of post-Cartesian moral apriorism the 'corruption of our moral sentiments' can be both virtuously noted and practically disregarded; just as in the Kantian conceptualization of 'Practical Reason' from the standpoint of political economy the moral maxims demanded from the individual can be both modelled on the 'form of the natural law' and relegated to a separate noumenal world, in order to avoid facing up to conflicts in value as they necessarily arise from the antagonisms of the real world.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Weber's 'private demons' - conceived in the dualistic spirit of this long established philosophical tradition, even if in the formulation of the specific Weberian dichotomies the imagery and the conceptual apparatus are adjusted to the pessimistic Spengler-like vision of their author's conflict-torn age - can offer nothing but unashamedly subjective and arbitrary 'world-views', as well as the corresponding range of irreconcilable 'private values', to the self-oriented individual, in an irrationalistic and thoroughly hopeless opposition to the public world of facticity, in which the struggle against the inhumanities of the 'commercial spirit' must be won or lost.

8. THE DOMINANCE OF COUNTER-VALUE IN ANTINOMOUS VALUE-RELATIONS

RETURNING to a problem indicated earlier, all these ideologically convenient dualisms and dichotomies of political economy and philosophy - not least the opposition between *de facto* and *de jure* through which the dehumanizing contingency of the existent can be elevated to the glorified status of *de jure* unalterable lawfulness - cannot be explained simply in terms of the internal conceptual determinations of the various theories concerned. For they become intelligible only if we relate them to the manifold actual dualisms and antinomies of the prevailing socioeconomic order from which they necessarily arise.

As regards the latter, at the core of commodity society's dichotomously articulated structure of domination and subordination we are confronted by the most absurd of all conceivable dualisms: the opposition between the *means* of labour and *living labour* itself.

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This perverse practical dualism finds its tangible manifestation across the long trajectory of capitalist historical developments in the irreconcilably antagonistic - yet not merely by political economy and philosophy 'eternalized' but also materially/institutionally safeguarded and constantly reinforced - interaction and unstable structural dependency between *capital* and *labour*. The irrepressible conflictuality of this interaction and the instability resulting from it make it imperative to *reproduce* the relationship between capital and labour as a form of structural dependency, secured through a complex network of partial determinations which all display an intrinsically dichotomous character and are uneasily integrated into a dualistic overall framework. And precisely because capital's whole system of actual dualisms - burdened with vital reproductive functions - cannot possibly afford to be a neutral one, notwithstanding the great assortment of spurious theoretical claims to 'value-neutrality' which we are familiar with, the historically given dual structures are not ordered in the social world 'laterally', but in strict hierarchical *subordination* to one another.

This is a determination of paramount importance, bringing with it far-reaching consequences for theory. For the unsurpassable practical imperative of super- and sub-ordination - without which the capital system quite simply could not function, whatever the ideological wishful thinking encapsulated in the slogans of 'people's capitalism' and 'share-owning democracy' - means that *one* side of the relationship, of necessity, *dominates* the other, no matter how inextricably it must rely on the dominated side for its own sustenance. Inevitably, therefore, on the plane of socio-economic life itself this kind of lopsided dualistic interrelationship can only temporarily stabilize itself through the production and reproduction of rigid hierarchies and increasingly centralized and reified institutional devices of control, thereby foreshadowing major explosions and ultimately a structural breakdown, in place of flexible mediations and dialectical transitions.

As to the theoretical consequences involved, they can be summed up with reference to how badly all attempts at dialectically overcoming the recognized dualisms and dichotomies must suffer within such parameters that happen to be circumscribed by the standpoint of political economy.

They are condemned to failure even when the philosopher in question is as great

a dialectician as Hegel himself. For once the prevailing socio-economic system of super- and sub-ordinations is taken for granted (as it must be, of course, from the standpoint of capital's political economy), the announced programme of 'dialectical mediation' between reified extremes invariably turns out to be a *sham* mediation. It amounts to no more than direct or indirect social apology, and the promise of 'dialectical unity' (to replace the more or less openly acknowledged dualisms and dichotomies) as well as the programme of realizing 'universality' (in 'transcendence' of the opposing, and again dualistically defined, partialities) prove to be nothing but vacuous, ought-ridden, and within the advocated horizons totally unrealizable *postulates*.

There can be no theoretical solution to the identified dualisms and dichotomies so long as the ongoing social processes themselves constantly reproduce the antinomies of real life, which give rise to such philosophical conceptualizations. This is why in the end, even the most genuine dialectical enterprise must be defeated by the resistance of capital's actuality and has to take refuge on the imaginary desert island of its own ideal postulates and fictitiously universalistic conceptual 'transcendences'.

IF we now take a closer look at the absurd practical dualism of opposing the *means* of labour (capital) to *living* labour, we find not only that the former dominates the latter but also that through such domination the only truly meaningful subject/object relationship is completely *overturned* in actuality, resulting in similarly overturned conceptualizations.

Paradoxically, the ground from which this thorny issue arises could not be more tangible. For the actual relationship between subject and object, in its original constitution, is inseparable from the conditions of production and reproduction of the human agency and from the assessment of the object (the means and material of production) without which no social metabolic reproduction - through the historically specific mode of human interchange with nature - is conceivable. Yet, through the refracting prism of philosophical mystification (ideologically linked to insurmountable class interests), the tangible substance of the underlying concrete material and social relationships is metamorphosed into a metaphysical riddle whose solution can only take the form of some unrealizable ideal postulate, decreeing the *identity* of subject and object. And

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precisely because the issue, in its fundamental structural determination, concerns the relationship between the *working subject* and the object of its productive activity - which under the rule of capital cannot help being an intrinsically exploitative relationship -, the possibility of disclosing the real nature of the problems and conflicts at stake, with a view of transcending them in other than a purely fictitious form, must be practically non-existent. For inasmuch as the thinkers - be they bourgeois political economists or philosophers - identify themselves with the standpoint (and corresponding material interests) of capital, they must envisage a 'solution' in a way that leaves the practically overturned relationship between the working subject and its object in reality itself absolutely intact.

As a result of the practical overturning of this vital relationship in the real world, the true subject of essential productive activity is degraded to the condition of a readily manipulable object. At the same time, the original object and formerly subordinate moment of society's productive interchange with nature is elevated to a position from which it can usurp the role of human subjectivity in charge of decision-making.

This new 'subject' of institutionalized usurpation is in fact a pseudo-subject, since it is forced by its fetishistic inner determinations to operate within extremely limited parameters, substituting its own blind material dictates and imperatives - to which then really 'there can be no alternative' - for the possibility of consciously adopted design in the service of human need.³¹

Characteristically, parallel to these developments we find that philosophy either simply codifies (and legitimates) the stark opposition between subject and object in its naked immediacy, or makes an attempt to 'overcome' it through the ideal postulate of an '*identical subject and object*'.

The latter is, of course, a thoroughly mystical proposition that takes us

³¹ An interesting example is Merleau-Ponty. For, while he rightly castigates the dualism of Sartre's philosophy (in *Les aventures de la dialectique*, 1955), he can only oppose to it a watered-down version of the Hegelian 'subject-object identity'. At the same time Merleau-Ponty also remains wedded to the vacuous postulate of abstract 'universalism'. See in this respect his sharp exchange with Sartre as recorded in their 'Intervention à un Colloque organisé par la Société Européenne de Culture à Venise', 25-31 March 1956, *Comprendre*, September 1956.

absolutely nowhere, since it leaves the existing dualism and inversion of the relationship concerned in the actual world exactly as it was before the appearance of such `transcending criticism'. And precisely because the practical dualism and overturning of the subject/object relationship is constantly *reproduced* in actuality, we are repeatedly presented in philosophy, in one form or another, with the problematic of subject/object duality, as seen from the standpoint of capital and its political economy. For a social standpoint of that kind cannot possibly question the actuality of this *inversion*, let alone capital's exploitative domination of labour corresponding to it. Consequently the solution of the problem at issue remains permanently beyond its reach as set by the blind material imperatives of its own pseudo-subjectness.

In this sense there is indeed here before us a curious `subject/object identity', even if its unvarnished reality could not be more different from its abstract philosophical conceptualization and idealization. It consists in the totally arbitrary identification of the *object* (means of labour/capital) with the position of the *subject* (by way of deriving the `self-consciousness' or `subject-identity' of philosophical discourse from the thinkers' self-identification with the objectives that emanate from the material determinations of capital as *self-positing subject/object*), coupled with the simultaneous elimination of the *real subject* (living labour, the working subject) from the philosophical picture. No wonder, therefore, that the elusive quest for the `identical subject/object' persists to our own days as a haunting philosophical Chimera.

ANOTHER practical dualism of the greatest importance in capitalist society is manifest in the relationship between *exchange* and *use*. Again, just like in the perverted subject/object relationship, exchange succeeds in one-sidedly dominating use in direct proportion to the degree to which generalized commodity production stabilizes itself and *overturns* the former dialectical primacy of use over exchange, asserting also in this respect its rigid material determinations and interests with total disregard for the consequences.

As a result of these developments, use-value corresponding to need can acquire the right to existence only if it conforms to the aprioristic imperatives of self-expanding exchange-value. It is therefore doubly ironical that one of the principal philosophies of the epoch should consider itself the champion of

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'*Utilitarianism*' at a time when all genuine concern for *non-profitable utility* is ruthlessly obliterated and replaced by the universal commodification of objects and human relations alike, thanks to the apparently irresistible forward march of the 'commercial spirit' whose triumph the selfsame philosophy wholeheartedly approves.

To appreciate the full import of this structural subordination of use to exchange in capitalist society, we have to situate it in the context of a number of other important practical dualisms which have a direct bearing upon it; - notably the interrelationship between *abstract* and *concrete*, *quantity* and *quality*, and *time* and *space*.

- In all three instances we should be able to speak, in principle, of a *dialectical* interconnection. However, on closer inspection we find that in their historically specific manifestations under the conditions of commodity production and exchange the objective dialectic is subverted by capital's reified determinations and *one* side of each relationship rigidly dominates the other.
- Thus the *concrete* is subordinated to the abstract, the *qualitative* to the quantitative, and the living *space* of productive human interactions - whether we think of it as 'nature at hand' in its immediacy, or under its aspect of 'worked-up nature', or take it as the work-environment in the strictest sense of the term, or, by contrast, with reference to its most comprehensive meaning as the vital framework of human existence itself under the name of the *environment* in general - is dominated by the tyranny of capitalist *time-management* and *time-accountancy*, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

Moreover, the way in which all four complexes are brought into a common interplay with one another under the determinations of capital greatly aggravates the situation. For, contrary to Lukács's at times Weberian reading of Marx in *History and Class Consciousness*, the problem is not that the 'contemplative stance' of labour 'reduces' space and time to a common denominator and

*degrades time to the dimension of space*³² but, on the contrary, that 'Time is everything, man is nothing'.³³ The *reduction* we find here concerns *labour* in its *qualitative specificity*, and not time and space as such. A reduction indeed through which qualitatively specific and rich 'compound labour' is turned into thoroughly impoverished 'simple labour', simultaneously also asserting the domination of the *abstract* over the *concrete* as well as the corresponding domination of *exchange-value* over *use-value*.

THREE quotations from Marx help to clarify these connections. The first comes from *Capital* and contrasts the position of Political Economy with the writings of classical antiquity:

Political Economy, which as an independent science, first sprang into being during the period of manufacture, views the *social division of labour* only from the standpoint of manufacture, and sees in it only the means of producing more commodities with a given quantity of labour, and, consequently, of cheapening commodities and hurrying on the *accumulation of capital*. In most striking contrast with this accentuation of *quantity* and *exchange-value*, is the attitude of the writers of classical antiquity, who hold exclusively by *quality* and *use-value*. ... If the growth of the quantity is occasionally mentioned, this is only done with reference to the greater abundance of *use-values*. There is not a word alluding to *exchange-value* or to the cheapening of commodities.³⁴

The second quotation highlights the way in which the *reduction* exercised by the political economists obliterates the *social determinateness* of individuals - depriving them thereby of their *individuality*, since there cannot be true individuality and particularity in abstraction from the rich multiplicity of social determinations - in the service of the dominant ideological interests. It reads as follows:

Society, as it appears to the political economist, is civil society, in which every individual is a totality of needs and only exists for the other person, as the other exists for him, in so far as each becomes a means for the other. The political

32 Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, p.89.

33 Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, MECW, Vol. 6, p.127.

34 Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp.364-5.

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economist *reduces* everything (just as does politics in its *Rights of Man*) to *man*, i.e., to the *individual* whom he *strips of all determinateness* so as to class him as *capitalist or worker*.³⁵

The concern expressed in the third quotation is in close affinity with the previous one whose implications point to the dialectic of true individuality arising from the manifold mediations of social determinateness. Marx opposes to this the reductive abstraction of the political economists who directly link *abstract individuality* and *abstract universality*. The passage in question brings into focus the relationship between simple and compound labour and the subordination of men to the rule of quantity and time. In Marx's words:

Competition, according to an American economist, determines how many days of simple labour are contained in one day's compound labour. Does not this *reduction* of days of compound labour to days of simple labour suppose that simple labour is itself taken as a measure of value? If the mere *quantity* of labour functions as a *measure* of value regardless of *quality*, it presupposes that simple labour has become the pivot of industry. It presupposes that labour has been equalized by the *subordination of man* to the *machine* or by the extreme *division of labour*; that *men are effaced by their labour*; that the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of *two workers* as it is of the speed of *two locomotives*. Therefore we should not say that one man's hour is worth another man's hour, but rather that *one man* during an hour is *worth just as much as another man* during an hour. *Time is everything, man is nothing*; he is at the most *time's carcass*. *Quality* no longer matters. *Quantity* alone decides everything; hour for hour; day for day;³⁶

Thus, within the framework of the existing socio-economic system a multiplicity of formerly dialectical interconnections are reproduced in the form of perverse practical dualisms, dichotomies, and antinomies, reducing human beings to a reified condition (whereby *they* are brought to a common denominator with, and become replaceable by, 'locomotives' and other machines) and to the ignominious status of 'time's carcass'. And since the possibility of practically manifesting and realizing the *inherent worth* and human specificity of all individuals through their essential productive activity is blocked off as a result

³⁵ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p.129.

³⁶ Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, op.cit., pp.126-7.

of this process of alienating reduction (which makes `one man during an hour worth just as much as another man'), *value* as such becomes an extremely *problematical concept*. For, in the interest of capitalist profitability, not only can there be no room left for the actualization of the individuals' specific worth but, worse still, *counter-value* must unceremoniously prevail over value and assert its absolute domination as the one and only admissible practical value-relation.

Adam Ferguson candidly admits this in one of the most important sections of his magisterial *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767):

Every undertaker in manufacture finds, that the more he can subdivide the tasks of his workmen, and the more hands he can employ on separate articles, the more are his expenses diminished, and his *profits increased*. ... Nations of tradesmen come to consist of members who, beyond their own particular trade, are *ignorant of all human affairs*, and who may contribute to the preservation and enlargement of the commonwealth, without making its interest an object of their regard or attention. Every individual is distinguished by his calling, and has a place to which he is fitted. The savage, who knows no distinction but that of his merit, of his sex, or of his species, and to whom the community is the sovereign object of affection, is astonished to find, that in a scene of this nature, *his being a man does not qualify him for any station whatever*; he flies to the woods with amazement, distaste and aversion. ... Many mechanical arts, indeed, require no capacity; they succeed best under a *total suppression of sentiment and reason*; and *ignorance* is the mother of industry as well as of superstition. Reflection and fancy are subject to err; but a *habit* of moving the hand, or the foot, is independent of either. Manufactures, accordingly, prosper most where the *mind is least consulted*, and where the workshop may, without any great work of imagination, be considered as *an engine, the parts of which are men*.³⁷

This is the context in which we can clearly identify the practical ground for the erection of the dichotomous ethical edifices that we have seen earlier. For the destruction of the relationship in which `facts' and `values', `is' and `ought' are inseparably joined together in the - not metaphysical but even to Ferguson's `savage' palpably self-evident - `inherent worth' and demonstrable `merit' of

37 Adam Ferguson. *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, edited, with an introduction, by Duncan Forbes, University Press, Edinburgh, 1966, pp.181-183.

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particular individuals engaged in their everyday life-activities, inevitably carries with it radical consequences for value as such. It is sundered into a *narrow utilitarian* aspect (corresponding to the needs of capital accumulation and universal commodification in the world of 'is'), and into an '*ideal* aspect' that - to no avail - counter poses the elusive 'moral worth' of its separate 'realm of ought' to the well-entrenched actuality of the existent.

IN the dualism of *distribution* and *production* we meet with the same characteristic of rigid determination, in that the one-sided distribution (class-expropriation) of the - strategically all-important - means of production predetermines the structural parameters of production for as long a historical epoch as the prevailing system of distribution can assert itself.

This is the absolute blind spot of all those who adopt capital's standpoint of political economy, even when they happen to be as great thinkers as Adam Ferguson. For on this vital issue even this outstanding (and rather neglected) figure of the Scottish Enlightenment can offer nothing but fairy-tales and circular pseudo-explanations, expecting us to believe that 'The *accidents* which *distribute* the means of subsistence unequally, *inclination*, and *favourable opportunities*, assign the different occupations of men; and a sense of *utility* leads them, without end, to *subdivide* their professions.'³⁸

Thus, the mere assumption of 'accidents', 'inclination', 'favourable opportunities', and 'a sense of utility' are meant to explain (and legitimate) the existing structural inequalities while, significantly, the key problem concerning the one-sided expropriation of the *means of production* is *conflated* into the vague

38 Ibid., p.180.

Due to the blindness which he shares with the whole tradition of classical political economy and philosophy as regards the real problem of distribution, even Ferguson's sharp diagnosis of what he himself considers to be the necessary defects of the capitalist system is in the end watered down. Thus, in a reconciliatory gesture he curiously mixes up genuine insight with an uncritical embellishment of the ruling order by suggesting that 'if many parts in the practice of every art, and in the detail of every department, require no abilities, or actually tend to contract and to limit the views of the mind, there are others which lead to general reflections, and to enlargement of thought. Even in manufacture, the genius of the master, perhaps, is cultivated, while that of the inferior workman lies waste. The statesman may have a wide comprehension of human affairs, while the tools he employs are ignorant of the system in which they are combined.' Ibid., p.183.

generality of 'accidents distributing the *means of subsistence* unequally', removing thereby the dimension of *class conflict*. As a result, it is conveniently obfuscated that distribution in capitalist society means first of all the distribution of human beings into antagonistic social classes, from which the domination of production in a hierarchically ordered way necessarily follows, in close conjunction with all the other fundamental dualisms and practical antinomies of the given order which we have seen above.

Hegel, too, fails to get to grips with the dialectic of production and distribution, whatever his intentions and claims to the contrary. This is visible also in the context of the peculiar 'universality' which he offers to us while maintaining the absolute - i.e. in his eyes philosophically grounded - legitimacy of the established social class-relations.³⁹ At this point it must be stressed that also Hegel *conflates* means of *production* with means of *subsistence*, as well as *work* with *socially divided labour*, so as to be able to glorify what he calls '*universal permanent capital*.'⁴⁰ He derives the latter from a fictitious 'ideality' that emerges from the Hegelian conceptual transformations that mirror the perverse *inversion* of the corresponding relations in actuality.

Thanks to such quasi-mystical philosophical deduction of the contingent actuality of the 'commercial spirit' from the 'Absolute Idea', the eternalized social order of 'universal permanent capital', and the structural inequality inseparable from it, can be defended in the name of superior 'dialectical Reason' against the '*folly of the Understanding*, which takes as real and rational its abstract *equality* and its "ought-to-be",' and forgets that:

Men are made *unequal by nature*, where inequality is in its element, and in *civil society* the *right* of particularity is so far from annulling this natural inequality that it *produces it out of mind* and *raises* it to an inequality of skill and *resources*, and even to that of *moral and intellectual* attainment.⁴¹

What we witness here is most revealing about the importance of ideological

³⁹ See in particular his *Philosophy of Right*, pp.122-34.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.130.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

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determinations for idealist and materialist/empiricist methodologies alike. Admittedly, the latter had no difficulty in conflating their alleged '*natural necessities*' - like Adam Smith's 'propensity to exchange and barter' and other so-called characteristics of 'human nature', said to be in perfect harmony with the established modality of socio-economic interaction - with the historically given, since it had no quarrel with nature itself on philosophical grounds.

Not so, however, the idealist philosophers, like Hegel, who could not help being *hostile* even to the mention of the word 'nature', since nature represents in their eyes the philosophically inferior domain of 'sensuous determinations'. And yet, we find that, in accordance with the ideological interests which Hegel shares with the materialist philosophers and political economists of his class, he does not hesitate for a moment to conflate *natural necessity* (the Hegelian dictum that 'men are made unequal by nature', which fallaciously equates the self-evident *diversity* of nature with the socially created and by no means unproblematical *inequality* of men among themselves) with *historical contingency* in order to mould '*absolute philosophical necessity*' out of such - for an idealist thinker truly peculiar - alloy.⁴² For in this way Hegel succeeds in conferring upon the historically created and *historically alterable* inequality of 'civil society' - an inequality now ideally metamorphosed into 'the *right of particularity*' on the purely assumptional idealist ground that 'the objective *right of the particularity of mind* is contained in the *Idea*'⁴³ - the status of *de jure* forever existent.

4242 Hegel resorts to a similar device in *The Philosophy of History* (p.96) when it suits his prejudices. Describing the 'African character' he asserts that 'the Negroes indulge that perfect contempt for humanity, which in its bearing on Morality and Justice is the fundamental characteristic of the race', contrasting the behaviour of the 'African race' with that of the bearers of 'the principle of the North' — i.e. the colonizing Europeans — by a positive reference to the instinctually correct behaviour 'among us'. Since, however, such an argument is in no way consonant with the spirit of his own philosophy, he has to add to this sentence a curious afterthought: 'if we can speak of instinct at all as appertaining to man'. But if indeed within the confines of idealist philosophy we cannot speak of instinct at all as appertaining to man, what could be the point of using it the way Hegel does - just as he uses a fictitious natural law which is supposed to have made men 'unequal by nature' - other than having it both ways, betraying through such eagerness and concomitant philosophical inconsistency his ideological interests?

43 Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, p.130

9. THE SUPERSESION OF DICHOTOMIES: THE QUESTION OF SOCIAL AGENCY

TO sum up: the interminable succession of philosophical dualisms and dichotomies in the writings conceived from the standpoint of capital's political economy - e.g., theory/practice; thought/being; subject/object; for-itself/in-itself; world-views/factual knowledge; immanence/transcendence; noumenal/phenomenal; essence/appearance; essence/existence; form/content; value/fact; ought/is; reason/emotion; Reason/Understanding; freedom/ necessity; individual/species; private/public; political/social; state/civil society; de jure/de facto; and many more - remains thoroughly unintelligible without the manifold practical dualisms and antinomies of the socio-economic order, which the dualistic methodologies of this tradition both express and help to sustain in their own way, with forceful ideological commitment and efficacy. We have also seen that the objective dichotomies and antinomies of capital's historical contingency constitute:

- (1) a closely *interlocking* system of determinations in which
- (2) *one* side of the various dualisms in question *dominates* the other,
- (3) on the basis of a perverse *overturning* and *inversion* of some vital objective relationships,
- (4) thereby establishing *rigid hierarchies* which apriori reject
- (5) the possibility of dialectical *mediations* and workable *transitions*
- (6) toward a *structural* change.

This is why philosophical dualism so easily triumphs in the post-Cartesian conceptual universe, preaching one-sided solutions (or the apriori impossibility of arriving at the required syntheses) where only a dialectical approach could begin to cope with the problems. Indeed, the success of even Hegel's conscious and rather unique attempt at dialectically overcoming the dichotomies of his predecessors is confined to the most abstract regions of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, precipitating again into 'unreconciled dualism' - complemented in his system by the abstract advocacy of making 'reconciliatory Reason' triumph over the critical temptations of the 'Understanding' - as soon as this great originator of the objective idealist dialectic turns his attention to more tangible issues and tries to subsume under his general categories the irreconcilable antagonisms of

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the real world.

Thus, the 'diremptions', alienations and reified oppositions of actuality assert themselves in the end on all planes, defeating even the greatest theoretical efforts to squeeze coherent dialectical solutions - *ex pumice aquam* ('water from stone') - out of the hopelessly constraining objective parameters of a divided social world whose stubborn structural antagonisms the thinkers in question try to 'reconcile' and defend.

The methodology of dualistic and dichotomous conceptualizations that ultimately always prevails, even when a conscious attempt is made to 'sublate' it, is the necessary concomitant of such ideological predicament. It has its inseparable corollaries:

- in the *conflation* of vital distinctions under allegedly unalterable general determinations and thereby the convenient obliteration of their potentially explosive sociohistorical specificities;
- in the *circularity* that results from being tossed to and fro between the two poles of the openly reasserted and accepted dichotomies, or indeed of the 'unreconciled dualisms' that bewilderingly reemerge after a thinker, like Hegel, thought to have done away with them;
- in the absence of genuine *mediations*, even when the philosopher is abstractly aware of their importance;
- in the mere assertion of vacuous *postulates* - like the ought-ridden advocacy of 'unity' and 'universality', on the ground of uncritically defended *partiality* - in place of objectively underpinned theoretical syntheses and socially viable practical strategies; postulates made necessary both by the idealization of indefensible partial interests and concomitant inequalities, and by the absence of mediations just mentioned.

Polarization is the objective rule, 'reconciliation' (without significantly changing the social ground of such polarization) the wishful remedy. This is how the standpoint of capital's political economy circumscribes the conceptual horizon of post-Cartesian theory.

BY implication, if we want to envisage the possibility of dialectical syntheses in place of the dualisms and dichotomies here surveyed, it is necessary to adopt a very different theoretical vantage point. One from which the fundamental antagonisms of the given socio-economic order can be recognized for what they really are, rather than being explained away by 'reconciliatory Reason'.

This involves, of course, the identification and adoption of categories adequate to grasping the dynamic historical specificity of social being. Categories through which the key regulators of the socio-economic and cultural/ideological intercourse become visible, instead of being obliterated by means of those ideologically motivated conceptual conflations which we have repeatedly encountered even in the writings of very great thinkers. For it is impossible to come to grips with such philosophical dualisms without referring them to the vantage point of a social agency whose practical intervention in the real world indicates the possibility of *actually* overcoming the now materially sustained antinomies and dichotomies, on the basis of the consciously articulated *collective* action of the *social* individuals.

The categories in question are, of course, radically incompatible with the *individualistic* categorical framework in terms of which those who share the standpoint of political economy try to deal with the dichotomy of *subject/object*, for instance, offering at best some highly dubious 'syntheses' of the dichotomy between self-oriented subjectivity and the comprehensive social world while reproducing the contradiction between fragmented/partial knowledge and 'totalizing consciousness'. Thus, the very least we can say in favour of the adoption of the Marxian 'standpoint of the *social* individual' is that the solutions articulated within individualistic categorical frameworks cannot help being abstract-imperative even when they are spelled out in a 'descriptive' form.

As an example we may think of Adam Ferguson's 'statesman' whose collective or 'combined' wisdom is derived from treating others as his *tools* (see note 38); or of Hegel's 'Cunning of Reason' that relates to the individuals - even to the so-called 'world-historical individuals' - in much the same way, only this time dressed up in solemn idealist costume. For even if we take such solutions at their face value, the underlying contradiction between the requirements of 'totalizing

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consciousness' and the inescapable limitations of self-oriented partiality (no matter how `aggregated') is by no means `superseded'. It is only temporarily hidden from sight by the reconciliatory acceptance of, and resignation to, the existing state of affairs.

But just as the dualisms and dichotomies of the post-Cartesian philosophical tradition arise from the soil of a determinate social practice, by the same token it is impossible to think of theoretically resolving them simply through the adoption of a new categorical framework, without envisaging at the same time an alternative social order from which the *practical* antinomies of capital's historically specific system can be removed. To take one example only, the earlier mentioned tyranny of capitalist *time-accountancy* (which reduces living labour to a mere `factor of production', or to a subordinate component of the category of `unit costs' in current economic parlance) and the lopsided dualism and domination of the social world implicit in it, can only be superseded in a qualitatively different framework of *social accountancy* (i.e., a truly *socialist* accountancy), orientated towards the conscious self-determination of their productive interchanges by the social individuals at all levels. This is the way Marx puts it:

In a future society, in which *class antagonism* will have ceased, in which there will no longer be any *classes*, *use* will no longer be determined by the *minimum* time of production; but the *time* of production devoted to an article will be determined by the degree of its *social utility*.⁴⁴

As we can see, the categories of `classes', `class antagonism', and `social utility' are linked to the conception of a new social order as objectively inherent in (or arising from) the contradictions of the given historical form. This is how it becomes possible to anticipate the super-session of the dichotomies of *use* and *exchange*, *time* and *space*, *production* and *distribution*, etc., provided that we are willing to acknowledge their social embeddedness in antagonistic class relations, envisaging at the same time the radical transformation of the latter through appropriate social action. The same goes for all the other dualisms, dichotomies,

⁴⁴ Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, MECW, Vol. 6. p.134.

and antinomies which we have encountered in the course of this survey. But, of course, to do so implies parting company with capital's standpoint of political economy and isolated individuality.