

realization were stressed more strongly than the necessity of the "that" (of which Marx remained too deeply convinced to need stressing), this should not be mistaken for an escape into a general philosophy of history or an exclusive concentration on the analytical restructuring of the modes of the capitalist economy. His intentions, throughout his life, were directed towards a "critique of the political economy" and this means the practical critique of capitalist society as much as it does its theoretical conception in the doctrines of the bourgeois economists. Marx did not bring forth a new proletarian economic theory to stand beside the classical bourgeois theories. And the widespread notion of an "economic theory for the proletariat" sometimes sanctioned by Marx and Engels themselves, is, by and large, misleading.

In *Das Kapital* Marx's reflections centered around a critique of those alienated social relations he had already criticized in 1844. If Marx (and particularly Engels later on), were not always conscious of the continuity of this critical approach, this would not amount to a serious objection against my interpretation. *Das Kapital* remains a fragment, and being bound to the galley of his journalistic writings, plagued by illness and lack of genuine enthusiasm, overwhelmed by organizational duties, Marx was no longer able to ponder his work and treat it as a whole. His successors had already begun during his life time to pick out pieces of his theoretical reflections which they found expedient for their political and organizational aims. The story of the interpretation of his work was, as in all cases of great thinkers, a story of misinterpretations.

COMMENT

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Fetscher's thesis is overwhelmingly correct: the old Marx is not a rejection nor even a revision of the young "moral" or "humanist" Marx. Nor does the later economic analysis abandon the dialectical character of the earlier writings. Rather, as Fetscher shows, the concepts of alienation and objectification which are central to the so-called "humanist" writings are central

also to the critique of political economy in *Das Kapital*. Further the so-called economic alienation exemplified in the fetishism of commodities is not simply an "economic" matter but remains still that human self-alienation which Marx discusses in his early works.

What then is the difference, if any, between the young and the old Marx? In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx suggests that whereas Feuerbach speaks of an abstract humanity, of "human essence," the need is to address oneself instead to the concrete, "sensuous-practical" life of man. In the *German Ideology*, this practical life is described as rooted in the two-fold activity of the production of the needs of daily existence and the production of men—i.e. human reproduction and all that this entails in the way of family and social organization. Perhaps the difference between "young" and "old" is no more than the difference between the earlier programmatic statements and the elaboration and fulfillment of this program in the mature works; for in a clear sense, the analysis of capitalist production and exchange is the elaborated critique of "sensuous-practical" human activity in its concrete form, in commodity production. One might conclude that the early Marx remained relatively abstract and programmatic in his formulations and that the older Marx was therefore more concrete in applying these formulations to the existing historical conditions. But this will not do, for it perpetuates a positivist myth: that the "humanism" of the early Marx is poetic and metaphorical and thus "abstract" and that "concreteness" is reserved to hard-headed economic analysis. However there may just as well be a humanism which is "concrete," as there may be an economic analysis which is "abstract" (in the sense in which both Marx and Hegel understood these terms). Moreover it seems a perverse and narrow "dialectic" which insists that the young and the old Marx are dichotomous because they are different, as if the integrity and continuity of Marx's philosophical framework could have been preserved only if he had spent the rest of his life endlessly repeating what he had said in his earliest works. On such a perverse view, Marx's *development*, in the sense that his later works are transformations of earlier ideas, is taken to be evidence that his later work is opposed to, or even contradictory to, his earlier work. A profounder view of the integrity of Marx's views from "young" to "old" is to see in Marx the fundamental continuity of certain root-concepts—in particular, the central ones of alienation and objectification.

As Fetscher points out perspicuously, the integrity and continuity of Marx's philosophical views can be seen in the concept of commodity (*Ware*) in *Das Kapital*. Here the process of alienation (which Hegel had examined in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, and Feuerbach in *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, as a process of alienation in *consciousness*) is given its materialistic interpretation as having its ground in the practical

alienation of one's life activity in production—i.e. in the transformation of labor into labor-power, as being itself an estranged (*entfremdete*) object, as an exchange-value.

Here the clue to Marx's epistemology is clear. The deeper thesis, which underlies both the earlier and the later writings, is that consciousness arises out of and is shaped by *praxis*, or dialectically speaking, that consciousness is itself the transformation or *Aufhebung* of *praxis* from sheer blind activity to activity directed upon an object. But this *Vergegenständlichung* or objectification of one's own *praxis* requires that this *praxis* becomes an object of consciousness, that its immediacy in sheer activity be overcome. This is not simply a matter of reflex-awareness, nor is the representation of *praxis* a matter of passive mirroring. The *praxis* can be represented as objective only if in fact it has become an object, separated from the subjective activity of man; that is, the condition for the objectification of *praxis* is the alienation of the object of this activity from the activity itself, the representation of the self's activity under the form of an "other," set over against the self. The self which represents this *praxis* as an alienated being, in its "mystical" or "imaginary" or "phantasmagorical" form has not yet achieved conscious—i.e. rational—domination over its own *praxis*.

Fetscher is doubly right in using the Leibnizian analogy of the *monad* in this context: the self, as "monad," mirrors the social character of the commodity in the isolated object, the economic "quantum"; and at the same time, the social character of the commodity mirrors the totality of social relations of production which constitute the self as a social being. As Feuerbach sought the character of human essence in its projected form in religious consciousness, so Marx seeks the character of man's practical nature under the concrete conditions of commodity-production in its projected form in the commodity itself. If the commodity were indeed the ultimate "unit" of Marx's analysis, it would not be a fetish. And if Marx had obliged the critics by leaving out such residues of dialectics as "the fetishism of commodities," then one could have comfortably settled down with Marx as another classical economist. But Marx's analysis in *Das Kapital* is at the same time political economy and philosophical anthropology. The analysis of the commodity is for him a fundamental means whereby to analyze the abstract "human" nature in its concrete historical-social form. Thus, in this sense, Marx's later work is the continuation of his earlier work, indeed the answer to and the elaboration of Feuerbach's analysis of "human essence." Commodity-analysis thus evidences the human in revealing the character of that *praxis* which is hidden in the commodity-as-fetish and in the production relations of capitalism. Marx's ostensibly "economic" analysis is no more and no less

than the disalienation of the concept of *praxis*, and in this sense it remains phenomenological and anthropological analysis as well.

The shibboleth that Marx deals simply with "economic man," i.e. with an abstraction fashioned for purposes of economic analysis, is the least literate of the current illiteracies concerning Marxism. We should add this to Fetscher's account of the perversions which abstract "organizational" or "political" consequences on the one hand or simply "historical" ones on the other. Fetscher shows in his paper that each of these is a perversive abstraction of that integral social human being, that "whole" which is retained in Marx's view. It should be added that the "economist" abstraction of Marx is no less vicious than these others; Marx has no philosophical consistency on the grounds of reducing Marx's political economy to some abstracted version of economic analysis and then contrasting this with an equally abstracted early "humanism." This misses the whole point of Marx's development: that political economy is, in effect, applied anthropology and that Marx seeks in the fact of abstracted economic man the sources of this abstraction, of this alienation of man's integral *praxis* in the form of simply "economic" activity. The mode of analysis is empirical here as it is in Marx's analysis of real value, for example. There is no transcendental access to human nature by way of establishing some human essence in thought; rather, it is in the examination of concrete practice that knowledge of man's nature is to be achieved. (In the same way, for example, Marx sees the analysis of the real value of commodities as depending, in the first instance, on the analysis of concrete relations among commodities in the marketplace—i.e. their exchange-values and the relation of this exchange-value to cost of production.)

The "whole man" for Marx is therefore not simply the "economic man," but the man whom "economic man" hides from view and represses as long as production, circulation and exchange are such that commodities remain "objects" beyond humanly conscious—i.e. rational—control. Dialectically, the achievement of such control requires such an "objectification" as its condition, not simply out of some conative *Drang* of consciousness for an object of consciousness—this is after all Marx's criticism of Feuerbach's "passive" or "abstract" version of alienation—but rather out of the needs of conscious practice itself, in meeting the needs of existence. In short, commodity production has to be fully objectified before the possibility of dominating it can appear. In this sense too Fetscher rightly assesses Marx's non-and-anti-romantic view of capitalist development. Capitalism is not simply a morally repugnant fall from grace, but it is the necessary stage for the development of that socialized production which provides the basis for the transformation of production relations from those between non-human "objects" into I-Thou relations.

Marx sought this transformation not in the realm of a change of heart or of feeling—though he did not deny that it could take place there as well. The reason was that he sought a fundamental social transformation, not simply an individual one. One may love one's wife and children, one's friends or one's fellow human beings in Kant's sense of treating them as ends and not as means only. However Marx argued that the possibility of a radical transformation of human relations of this sort lay not in the marginal relations outside the fundamental human *praxis* of producing the means of existence and providing for the continuity of the species but rather in the heart of this *praxis* itself, i.e., in the relations of production. What Feuerbach set forth as the essence of humanity—the recognition of one's species character, of oneself as member of a species, as a human being among human beings—Marx developed as the recognition of one's species-character in the concrete, i.e. in socialized production, mirrored in alienated form in the commodity and to be disalienated in the achievement of the socialization of production-relations. Since the objectification of this social character of production is achieved most fully in capitalist commodity production, then (in this dialectical sense) capitalist production lays the foundations for real humanism, but it does so only in alienated form, in commodity-relations, in the “cash-nexus” between man and man. For Marx, however, the disalienation depends not simply on the “recognition” of the social nature of commodity production. Contrary to the “critical critics” with whom Marx and Engels battled in *The Holy Family* and in *The German Ideology*, Marx saw this “recognition” not as simply an intellectual or “rational” domination of the sociality of production in theory, but rather as the embodiment of this theoretical understanding in the practice of a socialist society. If disalienation were to be achieved simply by enlightenment, then the Marxian millenium should have arrived with the publication of *Das Kapital*. Marx insists instead on a “recognition” in *praxi*—i.e. in the transformation of the contradiction between private ownership of the means of production and the social nature of commodity-production, or in Marx's terms, between the forces of production and the production relations; this transformation constitutes, in effect, “real” as opposed to “theoretical” socialism.

It remains a fact of present-day life in socialist societies that the simple economic transformation may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the achievement of “real humanity.” But more than this, neither Marx nor Engels ever claimed. The ascription to them of simple-minded “economic determinist” or “epiphenomenalist” doctrines in terms of which changes in economic organization are simply “reflected” in human, conscious relations completely vulgarizes Marx's and Engels' views of the relations between being and consciousness. A critical consciousness,

one which does not merely mirror passively but which is itself active in changing human practice, is thus not simply a reflex of an abstracted "economic man." Rather, it is itself the achievement of an enlightened *praxis* which can no more remain at mere "awareness" of socialized production, in the passive sense, than Marx's thought could remain simply at a passive "awareness" of capitalist production and exchange.

An enlightened *praxis* demands criticism in order to achieve full self-conscious awareness; it demands therefore the full release of critical human faculties. "Marxist orthodoxy" is thus a contradiction in terms and could come to be embodied only in what one may call an alienated Marxism, one whose essence, in critical *praxis*, has become petrified in the fossil-form of ritual and dogma and has in effect been turned upon itself. Every one of the forms of "abstract" Marxism, which Fetscher so clearly describes, runs the risk of such fossilization, no matter how "concretely" it represents itself, in terms of action, or of practical embodiment in state and organization. Such abstractive misinterpretations, it seems to me, lie in two directions, represented by adherence to either a "young" or an "old" Marx. For the revelation of Marx as an abstract humanist is as much a misconstrual as the depiction of him as having somehow gotten over this humanism or of retaining it only as a left-over or residual romanticism of the early Feuerbachian years.