

Annotations to Bhaskar's Possibility of Naturalism

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This is chapter 2 of Roy Bhaskar's *Possibility of Naturalism*, third edition, Routledge 1998, ISBN 0-415-19874-7 (pbk). Jump to the beginning of pages 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, and 79 in the book. Or go to the diagrams for Model I, II, III, IV, or to Mepham's scheme. L^AT_EX markup by Hans G. Ehrbar, Economics Department, University of Utah.

CHAPTER 2

Societies

1. Introduction

What properties do societies possess that might make them possible objects of knowledge for us?

The non-philosopher might consider this an odd question. The general understanding is that anything that is real is a possible object of knowledge for us, and societies are real. However both links in this argument

have been put into doubt. From the point of view of methodological individualism, statements about societies are only summations of statements about individuals, i.e., the societies themselves are not real, they are mere constructions made up in our minds to simplify things, only individuals are real. Bhaskar will argue that methodological individualism is wrong, and that societies are indeed real. But Bhaskar has also argued in RTS that being real is not a sufficient condition for being a possible object of knowledge for us. Rather, the world has to be a certain way for science about it to be possible.

My strategy in developing an answer to this question will be effectively based on a pincer movement. But in deploying the pincer I shall concentrate first on the ontological question of the properties that societies possess, before shifting to the epistemological question of how these properties make them possible objects of knowledge for us. This is not an arbitrary order of development. It reflects the condition that, for transcendental realism, it is the nature of objects that determines their cognitive possibilities for

us; that, in nature, it is humanity that is contingent and knowledge, so to speak, accidental.

In RTS, Bhaskar clearly distinguishes between philosophical and scientific ontology. The knowledge gained by asking the question “what must the world be like for science to be possible” is the philosophical ontology.

Now, in PON, Bhaskar is talking about those ontological features of societies which allow them to become objects of “knowledge” for us. It will become clear below that he means *scientific* knowledge here. This is therefore a pre-scientific consideration: before we begin with science itself, we look at those features of societies which make science possible. I.e., these are “metaphysical” claims. Now what is the basis on which Bhaskar makes these claims? In RTS, his basis for his claims in “philosophical ontology” are the possibility of science: we know that certain scientific methods are successful, and from this we can deduce that the world must have certain properties. Now the possibility and success of social sciences is much more in doubt than that of natural sciences, and Bhaskar does not use the possibility of social sciences to back up his claims about societies.

On the contrary, he argues that many social scientists make assumptions about the ontological nature of societies which are not justified.

How else does he back up his claims? We are participants in societies, and as such we have knowledge about societies. Let us look at this question while we proceed. I think he uses our knowledge which we gain by being agents in our society.

To show that causality goes from the objects of science to science and not the other way round, Bhaskar brings the following metaphor:

Thus it is because sticks and stones are solid that they can be picked up and thrown, not because they can be picked up and thrown that they are solid (though that they can be handled in this sort of way may be a contingently necessary condition for our *knowledge* of their solidity).¹

Next paragraph brings a table-of-contents-like summary of the chapter, with a couple of references to the rest of the book:

In the next section I argue that societies are irreducible to people and in the third section I sketch a model of their connection. In that and the following section I argue that social forms are a necessary condition for

any intentional act, that their *pre-existence* establishes their *autonomy* as possible objects of scientific investigation and that their *causal power* establishes their *reality*. The pre-existence of social forms will be seen to entail a *transformational* model of social activity, from which a number of ontological limits on any possible naturalism can be immediately derived. In the fifth section I show how it is, just in virtue of these emergent features of societies, that social science is possible; and I relate two other types of limit on naturalism (viz. epistemological and relational ones) back to the fundamental properties of the transformational model itself. In the last section I use the results established in the previous section to generate a critique of the traditional fact/value dichotomy; and in an appendix to the chapter I illustrate the notion of social science as critique in the reconstruction of an essentially Marxian concept of ideology. Now it is important to note that because the causal power of social forms is mediated through human agency, my argument can only be formally completed when the causal status of human agency is itself vindicated. This is accomplished in Chapter

3 in the course of a parallel demonstration of the possibility of naturalism in the domain of the psychological sciences.

Now a nutshell summary of the results of this chapter:

The transformational model of social activity developed here will be seen to entail a *relational* conception of the subject-matter of social science. On this conception ‘society does not consist of individuals [or, we might add, groups], but expresses the sum of the relations within which individuals [and groups] stand’.² And the essential movement of scientific theory will be seen to consist in the movement from the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualized in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitate them. Of such relations the agents involved may or may not be aware. Now it is through the capacity of social science to illuminate such relations that it may come to be ‘emancipatory’. But the emancipatory potential of social science is contingent upon, and entirely a consequence of, its contextual explanatory power.

↑ The three basic results of this chapter are, therefore (my paraphrases):

- The word “society” does not refer to groups or masses of people, but to relations.
- Second-order reasoning is necessary to understand society.
- The more accurate a theory of society is, the greater its emancipatory power.

QUESTION 1. *Bhaskar claims, following Marx, that society does not consist of individuals but of relations. Explain in nontechnical terms what this means and how it matters.*

QUESTION 2. *What are second-order arguments? Why are second-order arguments indispensable for understanding societies?*

⇓ In preparation of his discussion of the naive view that society consists in what people are thinking, Bhaskar first (and a little abruptly) brings the example of a magnet: in this example it is clear that magnet F itself and the object in our thoughts about the magnet T are two distinct things:

Consider for a moment a magnet F and the effect it has on iron filings placed within its field. Consider next the thought T of that magnet and its

effect. That thought is clearly the product of science, of culture, of history. Unlike the magnet it has no (discounting psycho-kinesis) appreciable effect on iron. Now every science must construct its own object (T) in thought. But it does not follow from the fact that its thought of its real object (F) must be constructed in and by (and exists only in) thought that the object of its investigations is not independently real. (Indeed it was to mark the point, and the associated ambiguity in the notion of an object of knowledge, that I distinguished in Chapter 1 between transitive and intransitive objects.)

↓ In society, F and T are not disjoint, and this leads to the idea that society exists only in the thoughts and actions of individuals.

Now whereas few people nowadays, at least outside the ranks of professional philosophers, would hold that a magnetic field is a construction of thought, the idea that society is remains quite widely held. Of course in the case of society the grounds for this view are liable to consist in the idea that it is constituted (in some way) by the thought of social actors or participants, rather than, as in the case of the magnetic field, the thought

of observers or theorists (or perhaps, moving to a more sophisticated plane, in some relationship—such as that of Schutzian ‘adequacy’,³ accomplished perhaps by some process of dialogue or negotiation—between the two).

QUESTION 3. *Is society an independently real entity, or does it only exist in the thoughts and actions of the individuals in society?*

↓ This is related to the other misconception that only people exist, and “society” is only a different word for all the people:

And underlying that idea, though by no means logically necessary for it,⁴ is more often than not the notion that society just consists (in some sense) in persons and/or their actions. Seldom does it occur to subscribers to this view that an identical train of thought logically entails their own reducibility, via the laws and principles of neurophysiology, to the status of inanimate things!

In the next section I am going to consider the claims of this naive position, which may be dubbed *social atomism*, or rather of its epistemological manifestation in the form of *methodological individualism*,⁵ to provide a framework for the explanation of social phenomena.

Of course, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, if I am to situate the possibility of a non-reductionist naturalism on transcendental realist lines, then I must establish not only the autonomy of a possible sociology, but the reality of any objects so designated. That is to say, I must show that societies are complex real objects irreducible to simpler ones, such as people. For this purpose, merely to argue against methodological individualism is insufficient. But it is necessary. For if methodological individualism were correct, we could dispense entirely with this chapter, and begin (and end) our inquiry into the human sciences with a consideration of the properties, be they rationally imputed or empirically determined, of the individual atoms themselves: that is, of the amazing (and more or less tacitly generated) homunculus man.

2. Against Individualism

This section begins with a definition of methodological individualism:

Methodological individualism is the doctrine that facts about societies, and social phenomena generally, are to be explained solely in terms of facts

about individuals. For Popper, for example, ‘all social phenomena, and especially the functioning of social institutions, should be understood as resulting from the decisions etc. of human individuals . . . we should never be satisfied by explanations in terms of so-called “collectives”’.⁶ Social institutions are merely ‘abstract models’ designed to interpret the facts of individual experiences. Jarvie has even committed himself to the linguistic thesis that “‘army” is just the plural of “soldier” and all statements about the army can be reduced to statements about the particular soldiers comprising it’.⁷ Watkins concedes that there may be unfinished or half-way explanations of large-scale phenomena in terms of other large-scale phenomena, such as of inflation in terms of full employment(!),⁸ but contends that one will not have arrived at so-called rock-bottom (ultimate?) explanations of such phenomena until one has deduced them from statements about the dispositions, beliefs, resources and interrelations of individuals.⁹ Specifically, social events are to be explained by deducing them from the principles governing the behaviour of the ‘participating’ individuals and descriptions of their situation.¹⁰

↓ The deductive-nomological model says that science has to start with one set of “axioms” or similar, and deduce everything else from it. Methodological individualism says that in the social sciences this starting point must be the individual:

In this manner, methodological individualism stipulates the *material* conditions for adequate explanation in the social sciences to complement the *formal* ones laid down by the deductive-nomological model.

QUESTION 4. *What is methodological individualism? Give arguments for and against it.*

↓ In the next paragraph, Bhaskar claims that empirical evidence does not seem to support methodological individualism. Of course, there is also straightforward empirical evidence *for* methodological individualism: nothing happens in society unless some individual carries it out. Bhaskar will talk about this later. I would say that the empirical evidence regarding

methodological individualism is contradictory. But Bhaskar, at this point, focuses on that evidence which goes against methodological individualism:

Now when one considers the range of predicates applicable to individuals and individual behaviour—from those that designate properties, such as shape and texture, that people possess in common with other material things, through those that pick out states, such as hunger and pain, that they share with other higher animals, to those that designate actions that are, as far as we know, uniquely characteristic of them—the real problem appears to be not so much that of how one could give an individualistic explanation of social behaviour, but that of how one could ever give a non-social (i.e., strictly individualistic) explanation of individual, at least characteristically human, behaviour!¹¹ For the predicates designating properties special to persons all presuppose a social context for their employment. A tribesman implies a tribe, the cashing of a cheque a banking system. Explanation, whether by subsumption under general laws, advection to motives and rules, or redescription (identification), always involves irreducibly social predicates.

↓ Not only empirical evidence seems incompatible with methodological individualism, also the arguments generally given in support of methodological individualism are invalid.

Moreover, it is not difficult to show that the arguments adduced in support of methodological individualism cannot bear the weight placed upon them. Thus comparison of the motives of a criminal with the procedures of a court indicates that facts about individuals are not necessarily either more observable or easier to understand than social facts; while comparison of the concepts of love and war shows that those applicable to individuals are not necessarily either clearer or easier to define than those that designate social phenomena. Significantly, the qualifications and refinements proposed by methodological individualists weaken rather than strengthen their case. Thus the admission of ideal types, anonymous individuals *et al.*, into the methodological fold weakens the force of the ontological considerations in favour of it, while allowing 'half-way' and statistical explanations undercuts the epistemological ones. Moreover, the examples cited of supposedly genuinely 'holistic' behaviour, such as riots and orgies,¹² merely

reveal the poverty of the implicit conception of the social. For, upon analysis of their oeuvre, it turns out that most individualists regard ‘the social’ as a synonym for ‘the group’. The issue for them then becomes that of whether society, the whole, is greater than the sum of its constituent parts, individual people. And social behaviour then becomes explicable as the behaviour of groups of individuals (riots) or of individuals in groups (orgies).

QUESTION 5. *Describe similarities and differences between riots, orgies, and societies.*

Now I am going to argue that this definition of the social is radically misconceived. Sociology is not concerned, as such, with large-scale, mass or group behaviour (conceived as the behaviour of large numbers, masses or groups of individuals). Rather it is concerned, at least paradigmatically, with the persistent *relations* between individuals (and groups), and with the relations between these relations (and between such relations and nature and the products of such relations). In the simplest case its subject-matter may be exemplified by such relations as between capitalist and worker, MP

and constituent, student and teacher, husband and wife. Such relations are general and relatively enduring, but they do not involve collective or mass behaviour as such in the way in which a strike or a demonstration does (though of course they may help to explain the latter). Mass behaviour is an interesting social-psychological phenomenon, but it is not the subject-matter of sociology. The situation is made ironic by the fact that the more sophisticated individualists formally concede that relations may play a role in explanation. Why then the passion? I think that it must be explained, at least in part, by their predilection for a species of substantive social explanation, which they mistakenly believe to be uniquely consonant with political liberalism. As Watkins candidly puts it: ‘Since Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees* was published in 1714, individualistic social science, with its emphasis on unintended consequences, has largely been a sophisticated elaboration on the simple theme that, in certain situations, selfish private motives [i.e. capitalism] may have good social consequences and good political intentions [i.e. socialism] bad social consequences’.¹³ There is in fact one body of social doctrine, whose avatars include utilitarianism, liberal

political theory and neo-classical economic theory, which does conform to individualistic prescriptions, on the assumption that what is in effect a generalized aggregation problem can be solved. According to this model reason is the efficient slave of the passions¹⁴ and social behaviour can be seen as the outcome of a simple maximization problem, or its dual, a minimization one: the application of reason, the sole identifying characteristic of human beings, to desires (appetites and aversions in Hobbes) or feelings (pleasure and pain, in Hume, Bentham and Mill) that may be regarded as neurophysiologically given. Relations play no part in this model; and this model, if it applies at all, applies as much to Crusoe as to socialized humanity—with the corollary expressed by Hume that ‘mankind is much the same at all times and places’,¹⁵ simultaneously revealing its ahistorical and a priori biases.

The limitations of this approach to social science should by now be well known. To say that people are rational does not explain *what* they do, but only at best (that is, supposing that an objective function could be reconstructed for their behaviour and empirically tested independently of

it) *how* they do it. But rationality, setting out to explain everything, very easily ends up explaining nothing. To explain a human action by reference to its rationality is like explaining some natural event by reference to its being caused. Rationality then appears as an a priori presupposition of investigation, devoid of explanatory content and almost certainly false. As for neo-classical economic theory, the most developed form of this tendency in social thought, it may be best regarded as a normative theory of efficient action, generating a set of techniques for achieving given ends, rather than as an explanatory theory capable of casting light on actual empirical episodes: that is, as a praxiology,¹⁶ not a sociology.

Besides its championship of a particular explanation form, individualism derives plausibility from the fact that it seems to touch on an important truth, awareness of which accounts for its apparent necessity: namely the idea that society is made up or consists of—and only of—people. In what sense is this true? In the sense that the material presence of social effects consists only in changes in people and changes brought about by people on other material things—objects of nature, such as land, and artefacts,

produced by work on objects of nature. One could express this truth as follows: *the material presence of society = persons and the (material) results of their actions*. It is this truth that individualists have glimpsed, only to shroud it with their apologetic shifts.

It is evident that there is at work in methodological individualism a sociological reductionism and a psycho- (or praxio-) logical atomism, determining the content of ideal explanations in exact isomorphy with the theoretical reductionism and ontological atomism fixing their form.¹⁷ It thus expresses particularly starkly the couple defining the method and object of investigation (viz. sociological individualism and ontological empiricism) which I earlier (in Chapter 1) suggested structure the practice of contemporary social science.

This next paragraphs anticipate the more detailed treatment in the next section, and in part they make summary judgments about the methodology of Durkheim, Weber, and others, without explaining where they come from. Skip to the beginning of section 3.

Now the *relational* conception of the subject-matter of sociology may be contrasted not only with the *individualist* conception, illustrated by utilitarian theory, but with what I shall call the ‘collectivist’ conception, best exemplified perhaps by Durkheim’s work, with its heavy emphasis on the concept of the group. Durkheim’s group is not of course Popper’s. It is, to invoke a Sartrean analogy, more like a fused group than a series.¹⁸ In particular, as an index of the social, it is characterized by the possession of certain emergent powers, whose justification will be considered below. Nevertheless, the key concepts of the Durkheimian corpus, such as *conscience collective*, organic v. mechanical solidarity, anomie, etc., all derive their meaning from their relationship to the concept of the collective nature of social phenomena. Thus, for Durkheim, to the extent at least that he is to remain committed to positivism, enduring relationships must be reconstructed from collective phenomena; whereas on the realist and relational view advanced here collective phenomena are seen primarily as the expressions of enduring relationships. Note that, on this conception, not

only is sociology not essentially concerned with the group, it is not even essentially concerned with behaviour.

If Durkheim combined a collectivist conception of sociology with a positivist methodology, Weber combined a neo-Kantian methodology with a still essentially individualist conception of sociology. His break from utilitarianism is primarily at the level of the form of action or type of behaviour he is prepared to recognize, not at the level of the unit of study. It is significant that just as the thrust contained in Durkheim's isolation of the emergent properties of the group is checked by his continuing commitment to an empiricist epistemology, so the possibilities opened up by Weber's isolation of the ideal type are constrained by his continuing commitment to an empiricist ontology. In both cases a residual empiricism holds back, and ultimately annuls, a real scientific advance.¹⁹ For it is as futile to attempt to sustain a concept of the social on the basis of the category of the group, as it is to attempt to sustain a concept of necessity on that of experience. Marx did, I think, make an attempt to combine a realist ontology and a

relational sociology.²⁰ One can thus schematize four tendencies in social thought as in Table 2.1.

TABLE 2.1. Four Tendencies in Social Thought

	Method	Object
Utilitarianism	empiricist	individualist
Weber	neo-Kantian	individualist
Durkheim	empiricist	collectivist
Marx	realist	relational

N.B. Concepts of method (social epistemology) underpinned by general ontology; concepts of object (social ontology) underpinned by general epistemology.

It should be noted that as the relations between the relations that constitute the proper subject-matter of sociology may be *internal*, only the category of *totality* can, in general, adequately express it. Some problems stemming from this will be considered below. But first I want to consider

the nature of the connection between society and the conscious activity of people.

QUESTION 6. *What are internal relations? What is a totality?*

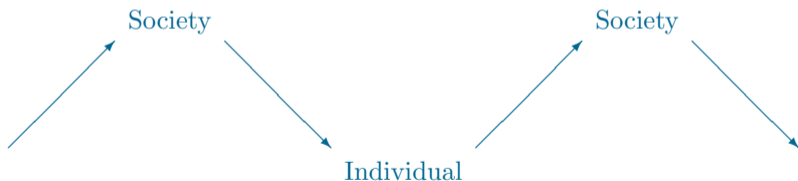
3. On the Society/Person Connection

In this section, Bhaskar develops his relational conception of society.

It is customary to draw a divide between two camps in sociological theory: one, represented above all by Weber, in which social objects are seen as the results of (or as constituted by) intentional or meaningful human behaviour; and the other, represented by Durkheim, in which they are seen as possessing a life of their own, external to and coercing the individual. With some stretching the various schools of social thought—phenomenology, existentialism, functionalism, structuralism, etc.—can then be seen as instances of one or other of these positions. And the varieties of Marxism can then also be neatly classified. These two stereotypes can be represented as in the diagrams below.

interrelationship between society and people. I want to discuss a plausible variant of such a model, advocated most convincingly by Peter Berger and his associates.²¹ Its weaknesses will, I think, enable us to work our way to a more adequate conception of the relationship between society and people, as well as to better display the errors of the conventional stereotypes.

According to the Berger model, which I shall call Model III, society forms the individuals who create society; society, in other words, produces the individuals, who produce society, in a continuous dialectic. Model III can be represented as below.



Model III: The 'Dialectical' Conception 'Illicit Identification'

According to the protagonists of this model ‘social structure is not characterizable as a thing able to stand on its own, apart from the human activity that produced it’.²² But equally, once created, ‘it is encountered by the individual [both] as an alien facticity [and] . . . as a coercive instrumentality’.²³ ‘It is *there*, impervious to his wishes . . . other than [and resistant to] himself.’²⁴ This scheme thus seems able to do justice both to the subjective and intentional aspects of social life and to the externality and coercive power of social facts. And thus to avoid at once any voluntaristic implications of the Weberian tradition and any reification associated with the Durkheimian one. For a categorial distinction is now drawn between natural and social facts, in that the latter, but not the former, depend essentially upon human activity.

Thus, while agreeing with Durkheim that ‘the system of signs I use to express my thoughts, the system of currency I employ to pay my debts, the instruments of credit I utilize in my commercial relations, the practices followed in my profession, etc., function independently of my use of them’,²⁵ the advocates of this model regard such systems, instruments and practices

as *objectivations* that, under certain conditions, take on an alienated form. According to them, objectivation is ‘the process whereby human subjectivity embodies itself in products that are available to oneself and one’s fellow men as elements of a common world’²⁶ and alienation is ‘the process whereby the unity of the producing and its product is broken’.²⁷ Thus languages, forms of political and economic organization, and cultural and ethical norms are all ultimately embodiments of human subjectivity. And any consciousness which does not see them as such is necessarily reified. Reification must, however, be distinguished from *objectivication*, which is defined as ‘the moment in the process of objectivation in which man establishes distance from his producing and its product, such that he can take cognizance of it and make of it an object of his consciousness’,²⁸ and is regarded as necessary to any conceivable social life.

On Model III, then, society is an objectivation or externalization of human beings. And human beings, for their part, are the internalization or reappropriation in consciousness of society. Now I think that this model is seriously misleading. For it encourages, on the one hand, a voluntaristic

idealism with respect to our understanding of social structure and, on the other, a mechanistic determinism with respect to our understanding of people. In seeking to avoid the errors of both stereotypes, Model III succeeds only in combining them. People and society are not, I shall argue, related 'dialectically'. They do not constitute two moments of the same process. Rather they refer to radically different kinds of thing.

Now Bhaskar derives his own model:

Let us consider society. Return for a moment to Durkheim. It will be recalled that, reminding us that the member of a church (or let us say, the user of a language) finds the beliefs and practices of his or her religious life (or the structure of his or her language) ready-made at birth, he argues that it is their existence *prior* to his or her own that implies their existence *outside* themselves, and from which their coercive power is ultimately derived.²⁹ Now if this is the case and the social structure, and the natural world in so far as it is appropriated by human beings, is always *already made*, then Model III must be corrected in a fundamental way. It is still true to say that society would not exist without human activity,

so that reification remains an error. And it is still true to say that such activity would not occur unless the agents engaging in it had a conception of what they were doing (which is of course the fundamental insight of the hermeneutical tradition). But it is no longer true to say that agents *create* it. Rather one must say: they *reproduce* or *transform* it. That is, if society is always already made, then any concrete human praxis, or, if you like, act of objectivation can only modify it; and the totality of such acts sustain or change it. It is not the product of their activity (any more, I shall argue, than human action is completely determined by it). Society stands to individuals, then, as something that they never make, but that exists only in virtue of their activity.

Now if society pre-exists the individual, objectivation takes on a very different significance. For it, conscious human activity consists in work on *given* objects and cannot be conceived as occurring in their absence. A moment's reflection shows why this must be so. For all activity presupposes the prior existence of social forms.

A social relation that shapes individual activity is called here a “social form.” Is this the definition of “social form”? Bhaskar argues next that human activity is not possible without such social forms.

Thus consider *saying*, *making* and *doing* as characteristic modalities of human agency. People cannot communicate except by utilizing existing media, produce except by applying themselves to materials which are already formed, or act save in some or other context. Speech requires language; making materials; action conditions; agency resources; activity rules. Even spontaneity has as its necessary condition the pre-existence of a social form with (or by means of) which the spontaneous act is performed. Thus if the social cannot be reduced to (and is not the product of) the individual, it is equally clear that society is a necessary condition for any intentional human act at all.

Now the necessary pre-existence of social forms suggests a radically different conception of social activity from that which typically informs

discussion of the society/person connection. It suggests an essentially Aristotelian one, in which the paradigm is that of a sculptress at work, fashioning a product out of the material and with the tools available to her. I shall call this the *transformational model of social activity*. It applies to discursive as well as to non-discursive practices; to science and politics, as much as to technology and economics. Thus in science the raw materials used in the construction of new theories include established results and half-forgotten ideas, the stock of available paradigms and models, methods and techniques of inquiry, so that the scientific innovator comes to appear in retrospect as a kind of cognitive *bricoleur*.³⁰ To use the Aristotelian terms, then, in every process of productive activity a material as well as an efficient cause is necessary. And, following Marx, one can regard social activity as consisting, analytically, in *production*, that is in work on (and with), entailing the transformation of, those material causes. Now if, following Durkheim, one regards society as providing the material causes of human action, and following Weber, one refuses to reify it, it is easy to see

that both society and human praxis must possess a *dual character*. Society is both the ever-present *condition* (material cause) and the continually reproduced *outcome* of human agency. And praxis is both work, that is, conscious *production*, and (normally unconscious) *reproduction* of the conditions of production, that is society. One could refer to the former as the *duality of structure*,³¹ and the latter as the *duality of praxis*.

QUESTION 7. *Describe Bhaskar's transformational model of social activity.*

Let us turn now to people. Human action is characterized by the striking phenomenon of intentionality. This seems to depend upon the feature that persons are material things with a degree of neurophysiological complexity which enables them not just, like the other higher-order animals, to initiate changes in a purposeful way, to monitor and control their performances, but to monitor the monitoring of these performances and to be capable of a commentary upon them.³² This capacity for second-order monitoring also makes possible a retrospective commentary upon actions, which gives

a person's account of his or her own behaviour a special status, which is acknowledged in the best practice of all the psychological sciences.

↓ One has to distinguish society from people, because people are intentional, society is not.

The importance of distinguishing categorically between people and societies, and correspondingly between human actions and changes in the social structure, should now be clear. For the properties possessed by social forms may be very different from those possessed by the individuals upon whose activity they depend. Thus one can allow, without paradox or strain, that purposefulness, intentionality and sometimes self-consciousness characterize human actions but not transformations in the social structure.³³ The conception I am proposing is that people, in their conscious activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production. Thus people do not marry to reproduce the nuclear family or work to sustain the capitalist economy. Yet it is nevertheless the unintended consequence (and inexorable result) of, as it is also a necessary condition for, their activity.

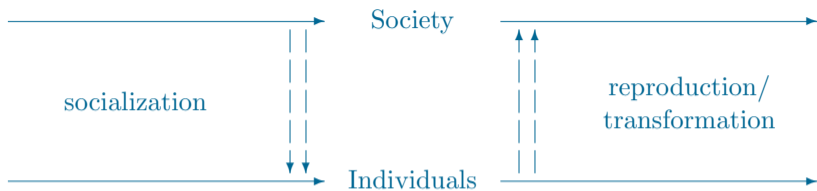
Moreover, when social forms change, the explanation will not normally lie in the desires of agents to change them that way, though as a very important theoretical and political limit it *may* do so. I want to distinguish sharply, then, between the genesis of human actions, lying in the reasons, intentions and plans of people, on the one hand, and the structures governing the reproduction and transformation of social activities, on the other; and hence between the domains of the psychological and the social sciences. The problem of how people reproduce any particular society belongs to a linking science of ‘sociopsychology’. It should be noted that engagement in a social activity is itself a conscious human action which may, in general, be described either in terms of the agent’s reason for engaging in it or in terms of its social function or role. When praxis is seen under the aspect of process, human choice becomes functional necessity.

Now the autonomy of the social and the psychological is at one with our intuitions. Thus we do not suppose that the reason why garbage is collected is necessarily the garbage collector’s reason for collecting it (though it depends upon the latter). And we can allow that speech is governed

by the rules of grammar without supposing either that these rules exist independently of usage (reification) or that they determine what we say. The rules of grammar, like natural structures, impose *limits* on the speech acts we can perform, but they do not *determine* our performances. This conception thus preserves the status of human agency, while doing away with the myth of creation (logical or historical), which depends upon the possibility of an individualist reduction. And in so doing it allows us to see that necessity in social life operates in the last instance via the intentional activity of agents. Looked at in this way, then, one may regard it as the task of the different social sciences to lay out the structural conditions for various forms of conscious human action—for example, what economic processes must take place for Christmas shopping to be possible—but they do not describe the latter.

The model of the society/person connection I am proposing could be summarized as follows: people do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which

individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity (the error of reification). But it is not the product of it (the error of voluntarism). Now the processes whereby the stocks of skills, competences and habits appropriate to given social contexts, and necessary for the reproduction and/or transformation of society, are acquired and maintained could be generically referred to as *socialization*. It is important to stress that the reproduction and/or transformation of society, though for the most part unconsciously achieved, is nevertheless still an *achievement*, a skilled accomplishment of active subjects, not a mechanical consequent of antecedent conditions. This model of the society/person connection can be represented as below.



Model IV: The Transformational Model of the Society/Person Connection.

Society, then, provides necessary conditions for intentional human action, and intentional human action is a necessary condition for it. Society is only present in human action, but human action always expresses and utilizes some or other social form. Neither can, however, be identified with, reduced to, explained in terms of, or reconstructed from the other. There is an ontological hiatus between society and people, as well as a mode of connection (viz. transformation) that the other models typically ignore.

Notice that on Model I there are actions, but no conditions; on Model II conditions, but no actions; on Model III no distinction between the two. Thus in Durkheim, for example, subjectivity tends to appear only in the

guise of the interiorized form of social constraint. But it should be equally clear, against voluntarism, that real subjectivity requires conditions, resources and media for the creative subject to act. Such material causes may be regarded, if one likes, as the results of prior objectivations. But they are, in *any* act, analytically irreducible and actually indispensable all the same. The 'given' component in social action can never be reduced to zero, analysed away.

The above differences between individual and society also have implications for social critique and for a vision of a non-alienated society:

This conception of the society/person connection thus implies a radical transformation in our idea of a non-alienating society. For this can now no longer be conceived as the immaculate product of unconditioned ('responsible') human decisions, free from the constraints (but presumably not the opportunities) inherited from its past and imposed by its environment. Rather it must be conceived as one in which people self-consciously transform their social conditions of existence (the social structure) so as to

maximize the possibilities for the development and spontaneous exercise of their natural (species) powers.

QUESTION 8. *What would a non-alienated society look like from the point of view of the transformational model of social activity?*

It should be noted that Model IV, as a result of its emphasis on material continuity, can sustain a genuine concept of *change*, and hence of *history*.³⁴ This is something that neither Model III nor the methodological stereotypes it attempts to situate as special cases can do. Thus Model III appears to involve continuous recreation, with genuine novelty, seemingly entailing incomplete social formation, something of a mystery. On the Weberian stereotype change reduces to contrast, and on the Durkheimian it can only be explained by advection to exogenous variables. Model IV, moreover, generates a clear criterion of historically significant events: viz. those that initiate or constitute ruptures, mutations or more generally transformations in social forms (such as Dalton's training as a meteorologist or the French Revolution).

QUESTION 9. *Describe the four models of the society/individual connection, and give their shortcomings and advantages.*

4. Some Emergent Properties of Social Systems

This section develops the implications of the Transformational Model of Social Activity that are relevant for social theory-making.

Now if social activity consists, analytically, in production, that is in work on and the transformation of given objects, and if such work constitutes an analogue of natural events, then we need an analogue for the mechanisms that generate it.

Bhaskar draws up an important analogy here:

Natural Sciences	Social Sciences
Events	Production
Generative Mechanisms	Social Structures

Just as in the natural sciences, underlying generative mechanisms (gravity) lead to events (a vase falling down), in the social sciences underlying social structures (means of production privately owned by the capitalist

class) allow production to happen, or prevent production (unemployment) or allow destruction to happen (wars). But they cannot be separated from their effects. Implications of this:

If social structures constitute the appropriate mechanism-analogue, then an important difference must be immediately registered—in that, unlike natural mechanisms, they exist only in virtue of the activities they govern and cannot be empirically identified independently of them. Because of this, they must be social products themselves. Thus people in their social activity must perform a double function: they must not only make social products, but make the conditions of their making, that is reproduce (or to a greater or lesser extent transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production. Because social structures are themselves social products, they are themselves possible objects of transformation and so may be only relatively enduring. Moreover the differentiation and development of social activities (as in the ‘division of labour’ and ‘expanded reproduction’ respectively) implies that they are interdependent; so social

structures may be only relatively autonomous. Society may thus be conceived as an articulated ensemble of such relatively independent and enduring generative structures; that is, as a complex totality subject to change both in its components and their interrelations. Now, as social structures exist only in virtue of the activities they govern, they do not exist independently of the conceptions that the agents possess of what they are doing in their activity, that is, of some theory of these activities. Because such theories are themselves social products, they are themselves possible objects of transformation and so they too may be only relatively enduring (and autonomous). Finally, because social structures are themselves social products, social activity must be given a social explanation, and cannot be explained by reference to non-social parameters (though the latter may impose constraints on the possible forms of social activity).

Some ontological limitations on a possible naturalism may be immediately derived from these emergent social properties, on the assumption (to be vindicated below) that society is *sui generis* real:

- (1) Social structures, unlike natural structures, do not exist independently of the activities they govern.
- (2) Social structures, unlike natural structures, do not exist independently of the agents' conceptions of what they are doing in their activity.
- (3) Social structures, unlike natural structures, may be only relatively enduring (so that the tendencies they ground may not be universal in the sense of space-time invariant).

These all indicate real differences in the possible objects of knowledge in the case of the natural and social sciences. (The internal complexity and interdependence of social structures do not mark a *necessary* difference from natural ones.) They are not of course unconnected, though one should be wary of drawing conclusions of the sort: 'Society exists only in virtue of human activity. Human activity is conscious. Therefore consciousness brings about change.' For (a) social changes need not be consciously intended and (b) if there are social conditions for consciousness, changes in it can in principle be socially explained. Society, then, is an articulated

ensemble of tendencies and powers which, unlike natural ones, exist only as long as they (or at least some of them) are being exercised; are exercised in the last instance via the intentional activity of human beings; and are not necessarily space-time invariant.

4.A. [The Ontological Status of Societies]. I now want to turn to the ontological status of societies.

In other words, Bhaskar asks here: are societies real? This assumption was made in the preceding paragraphs since the beginning of the section, but now it must be vindicated. Bhaskar basically says here that, were it not for societies, certain events would not happen, therefore societies are real. The reader may be able to skip this.

I have argued elsewhere that living things determine the conditions of applicability of the physical laws to which they are subject, so that their properties cannot be reduced to the latter; that is, that emergence characterizes both the natural and the human worlds³⁵ (and that this is consistent with what may be termed a ‘diachronic explanatory reduction’, that is, a reconstruction of the historical processes of their formation out of

‘simpler’ things). Now if, as I shall show in Chapter 3, intentional action is a necessary condition for certain determinate states of the physical world, then the properties and powers that persons possess in virtue of which intentionality is correctly attributed to them are real. Similarly, if it can be shown that but for society certain physical actions would not be performed, then employing the causal criterion set out in Chapter 1, one is justified in asserting that it is real.

Now I think that Durkheim, having established the *autonomy* of social facts using the criterion of *externality*, in effect employed just such a criterion to establish their *reality*, in invoking his other criterion of *constraint*:

I am not obliged to speak French with my fellow-countrymen nor to use the legal currency, but I cannot possibly do otherwise. If I tried to escape this necessity, my attempt would fail miserably. As an industrialist I am free to apply the technical methods of former centuries, but by doing so I should invite certain ruin. Even when I free myself from these rules and violate them successfully, I

am always compelled to struggle with them. When finally overcome, they make their constraining power felt by the resistance they offer.³⁶

Durkheim is saying in effect that but for the range of social facts, particular sequences of sounds, movements of bodies, etc., would not occur. Of course, one must insist, against Durkheim, that the range of social facts depends upon (though it is irreducible to) the intentional activity of human beings. The individualist truth that people are the only moving forces in history—in the sense that nothing happens, as it were, behind their backs; that is, everything that happens, happens in and through their actions—must be retained. Moreover, social structures must be conceived as in principle *enabling*, not just coercive. Nevertheless, in employing a causal criterion to establish the reality of social facts, Durkheim observed perfectly proper scientific practice—though it must be recognized that one is here dealing with a most peculiar kind of entity: a structure irreducible to, but present only in its effects.

Although Durkheim used a causal criterion to establish the reality of social facts, on a collectivist conception of sociology, the same criterion can be employed (with more epistemological consistency) to establish their reality on a relational one. (There is no special difficulty, as for example the concept of spin in physics shows, in ascribing reality to relations on a causal criterion.) Indeed, given the openness of the world within which its phenomena occur, it is only if a non-empirical object is specified for it that sociology's theoretical autonomy can be definitely secured—a point dramatically illustrated by the pitfalls into which Weber's definition of sociology,³⁷ which logically includes worship (because other-orientated) but excludes prayer, plunges it.

5. [Relation between TMSA and Relational Concept of Sociology]

What is the connection between the transformational model of social activity developed in the previous section and the relational conception of sociology advanced in the second section?

Here RB makes more precise what the relational conception of society entails. He brings the examples of factories, books, and rules of grammar:

The relational conception does not of course deny that factories and books are social forms. Nor does it insist that the rules of grammar (or the generative complexes at work in other spheres of social life) are, or must be conceived as, relations. But it maintains that their being *social*, as distinct from (or rather in addition to) material objects, and their consisting in *social* rules, as distinct from purely ‘anankastic’ ones³⁸ (which depend upon the operation of natural laws alone), depends essentially on, and indeed in a sense consists entirely in, the relationships between people and between such relationships and nature (and the products and functions of such relationships) that such objects and rules causally presuppose or entail.

↑ I think RB means here the following: factories and books aren’t social relations, but they are material objects the use of which in society are governed by social relations. The machines in a factory have their effects on natural objects independently of society, but social relations prescribe

who is allowed to enter through which door, who works the machines, what happens to the product, etc. Also a book is a material object, but social relations are necessary to that people can understand the language and know how to read, etc. Rules of grammar are not material objects, but they themselves are not social relations either; rather I would say they are immaterial structures. But it depends on social relations that the utterances in society must follow the rules of grammar in order to be understood.

It is not difficult to see why this must be so. For it follows from the argument of the previous section that social structures (a) be continually reproduced (or transformed) and (b) exist only in virtue of, and are exercised only in, human agency (in short, that they require active 'functionaries'). Combining these desiderata, it is evident that we need a system of mediating concepts, encompassing both aspects of the duality of praxis, designating the 'slots', as it were, in the social structure into which active subjects must slip in order to reproduce it; that is, a system of concepts designating the 'point of contact' between human agency and social structures. Such a point, linking action to structure, must *both* endure and be

immediately occupied by individuals. It is clear that the mediating system we need is that of the *positions* (places, functions, rules, tasks, duties, rights, etc.) occupied (filled, assumed, enacted, etc.) by individuals, and of the *practices* (activities, etc.) in which, in virtue of their occupancy of these positions (and vice versa), they engage. I shall call this mediating system the position-practice system. Now such positions and practices, if they are to be individuated at all, can only be done so *relationally*.

In other words, social relations are necessary to both enable and constrain individuals to fill the slots provided by the social structure.

It follows as an immediate consequence of this that the initial conditions in any concrete social explanation must always include or tacitly presuppose reference to some or other social relation (however the generative structures invoked are themselves best conceived). And it is, I suggest, in the (explanation of the) differentiation and stratification, production and reproduction, mutation and transformation, continual remoulding and incessant shifting, of the relatively enduring relations presupposed by particular social forms and structures that sociology's distinctive theoretical

interest lies. Thus the transformational model implies a relational interest for sociology. And it suggests in terms of that interest a way of differentiating sociology from the other social sciences (such as linguistics, economics, etc.), which, however, logically presuppose it.

It should be noted that neither individuals nor groups satisfy the requirement of continuity derived from the reapplication of Durkheim's criterion (of externality or pre-existence) for the autonomy of society over discrete moments of time. In social life only relations endure.³⁹ Note also that such relations include relationships between people and nature and social products (such as machines and firms), as well as interpersonal ones. And that such relations include, but do not all consist in, 'interactions'. (Thus contrast the relationship between speaker and hearer in dialogue with the deontic relationship between citizen and state.) Finally, it is important to stress that from the standpoint of the social sciences, though not necessarily either that of the psychological sciences or of historical explanation, the relations one is concerned with here must be conceptualized as holding

between the positions and practices (or better, positioned-practices), not between the individuals who occupy/engage in them.⁴⁰

One advantage of the relational conception should be immediately apparent. It allows one to focus on a range of questions, having to do with the *distribution* of the structural conditions of action, and in particular with differential allocations of: (a) productive resources (of all kinds, including for example cognitive ones) to persons (and groups) and (b) persons (and groups) to functions and roles (for example in the division of labour). In doing so, it allows one to situate the possibility of different (and antagonistic) interests, of conflicts *within* society, and hence of interest-motivated transformations in social structure. In focusing on distribution as well as exchange, the relational conception avoids the endemic weakness of (market) economics. And in allowing conflicts within society as well as between society and the individual, it remedies the chronic failing of (orthodox) sociology, preoccupied as that was (and indeed still is) with the ‘Hobbesian problem of order’.⁴¹

↓ Marx adds the premise of historical materialism:

Marx combined an essentially relational conception of social science and a transformational model of social activities with the additional premise—of historical materialism—that it is material production that ultimately determines the rest of social life.⁴² Now, as is well known, although it can be established a priori that material production is a necessary condition for social life, it cannot be proved that it is the ultimately determining one. And so, like any other fundamental conceptual blueprint or paradigm in science, historical materialism can only be justified by its fruitfulness in generating projects encapsulating research programmes capable of generating sequences of theories, progressively richer in explanatory power. Not the least of the problems facing historical materialism is that, although considerable progress has been made in particular areas of explanation, the blueprint itself still awaits adequate articulation. (One has only to think of the problem of reconciling the thesis of the relative autonomy of the superstructures with that of their determination in the last instance by the base to be reminded of this.)⁴³

Internal relations: Ollman vs. Coletti.

It is doubtful if any topic in philosophy has been more dogged by dogma than that of internal relations. The doctrine that all relations are external is implicit in the Humean theory of causality, where it is enshrined in the notion of the contingency of the causal connection. But it has been accepted by virtually the whole orthodox (empiricist and neo-Kantian) tradition in the philosophy of science. Conversely, rationalists, absolute idealists and mistresses of the arts of Hegelian and Bergsonian dialectics have usually subscribed to the equally erroneous view that all relations are internal. Here again, a major philosophical difference cuts across the Marxist/non-Marxist divide. Colletti and Ollman⁴⁴ represent only the most recent, and particularly extreme, variants of positions already fully articulated within Marxism at least as far back as Hilferding and Dietzgen. Now it is essential to recognize that some relations are internal, and some are not. Moreover, some natural relations (such as that between a magnet and its field) are internal, and many social relations (such as that between two cyclists crossing on a hilltop) are not. It is in principle an open question whether or not some particular relation, in historical time, is internal.

A relation R_{AB} may be defined as *internal* if and only if A would not be what it *essentially* is unless B is related to it in the way that it is. R_{AB} is *symmetrically internal* if the same applies also to B . (' A ' and ' B ' may designate universals or particulars, concepts or things, including relations.) The relation bourgeoisie–proletariat is symmetrically internal; traffic warden–state asymmetrically internal; passing motorist–policeman not (in general) internal at all. The fact that it is an epistemically contingent question as to whether or not some given relation is internal is obscured by the condition that when one knows what a thing's essential nature is, one is then often in a position to give a real definition of it; so that it will then appear to be analytic that B is related to it in the way that it is. But of course real definitions are not plucked a priori out of hats, spun out of thought alone. Rather they are produced a posteriori, in the irreducibly empirical process of science.⁴⁵

QUESTION 10. *What is an internal relation? Give examples.*

It is vital to appreciate that there can be no presumption of explanatory equality between the *relata* of an internal relationship. Thus capitalist

production may dominate (determine the forms of) exchange, without the latter ceasing to be essential for it. Internally related aspects may command, as it were, differential causal force. Or, to put it another way, *ontological depth* or stratification, defined causally, is consistent with *relational internality*, including symmetry, that is, existential parity. Indeed it is characteristic of the social sphere that surface structure is necessary for deep, just as *langue* is a condition of *parole* and intentionality of system.

Now most social phenomena, like most natural events, are *conjuncturally* determined and, as such, in general have to be explained in terms of a multiplicity of causes.⁴⁶ But, given the epistemic contingency of their relational character, the extent to which their explanation requires reference to a *totality* of aspects, bearing internal relations to one another, remains open. However, even a superficially external relationship, such as that between Breton fishermen and the owners of the shipwrecked tanker *Amoco Cadiz* may, given the appropriate focus of explanatory interest, permit (or necessitate) a totalization revealing, for example, the relationships between forms of economic activity and state structure. This ever-present

possibility of discovering what is a (potentially new) totality in a nexus accounts for the chameleon-like and ‘configurational’⁴⁷ quality of a subject-matter which is not only always changing but may (in this respect, like any other) be continually redescribed. Now although *totalization* is a process in thought, totalities are *real*. Although it is contingent whether we require a phenomenon to be understood as an aspect of a totality (depending upon our cognitive interests), it is not contingent whether it *is* such an aspect or not. Social science does not create the totalities it reveals, although it may itself be an aspect of them.

Society as a totality. Not all phenomena need to be understood as links in a totality (depends on our cognitive interests).

QUESTION 11. *Give an example of a situation that may or may not be understood as a link in a totality.*

Needs for a totalizing theory of history (Marxism):

It has always been the special claim of Marxism to be able to grasp social life as a totality, to display it, in Labriola’s words, as ‘a connection and complexus’,⁴⁸ whose various moments may of course be asymmetrically

weighted, primed with differential causal force. And Marxism has claimed to be able to do so in virtue of a theory of history, specifying *inter alia* the mode of articulation of the moments of that totality or instances of the social structure. The theory of history can only be judged by historical materials. But can anything be said, in the light of the foregoing analysis, about the intentions, if not the results, of this project?

Our analysis indicates a way of conceptualizing the relationship between the special social sciences (such as linguistics, economics, politics, etc.), sociology, history and a totalizing theory of society such as that ventured by Marxism. If history is above all the science of the 'past particular' and sociology is the science of social relations, the various social sciences are concerned with the structural conditions for (that is, the generative complexes at work in the production of) particular types of social activity. Of course, given the interdependence of social activities, hypostatization of the results of such particular analyses must be most assiduously avoided. Moreover, as external conditions may be internally related to the generative mechanisms at work in particular spheres of social life, the special sciences

logically presuppose a totalizing one, which, on the transformational model, can only be a theory of history. If sociology is concerned with the structures governing the relationships which are necessary, in particular historical periods, for the reproduction (and transformation) of particular social forms, its *explananda* are always specific; so there can be no sociology-in-general, only the sociology of particular historically situated social forms. In this way, sociology presupposes both the special sciences and history. But the relational conception entails that the *social* conditions for the substantive activities of transformation in which agents engage can only be *relations* of various kinds. And the transformational model entails that these activities are essentially *productions*. The subject-matter of sociology is, thus, precisely: *relations of production* (of various kinds). Now if such relations are themselves internally related and subject to transformation, then sociology must either presuppose or usurp the place of just such a totalizing and historical science of society as Marxism has claimed to be. In short, to invoke a Kantian metaphor,⁴⁹ if Marxism without detailed social scientific

and historical work is empty, then such work without Marxism (or some such theory) is blind.

6. On the Limits of Naturalism

In the third section I argued that the pre-existence of social forms is a necessary condition for any intentional act, and I showed how such pre-existence entails a transformational model of social activities. In the previous section I derived a number of ontological limits on naturalism, as emergent features of societies, and vindicated the notion of their *sui generis* reality. I now want to complete my argument by showing how, given that societies exist and have the properties (derived from the transformational model) that they do, they might become possible objects of knowledge for us.

It will be recalled that the major ontological limits on the possibility of naturalism turn on the activity-, concept-, and space-time-dependence of social structures (see (1) to (3) on p. 38). Before considering how social science is possible despite, or rather (as I shall attempt to show) because

of, these features, differentiating its subject-matter from nature, I want to consider two other types of limit of naturalism, which may be characterized as epistemological and relational respectively.

QUESTION 12. *Why is society, as an object of inquiry, necessarily 'theoretical', in the sense that it is necessarily unperceivable?*

Society, as an object of inquiry, is necessarily 'theoretical', in the sense that, like a magnetic field, it is necessarily unperceivable. As such it cannot be empirically identified independently of its effects; so that it can only be known, not shown, to exist. However, in this respect it is no different from many objects of natural scientific inquiry. What does distinguish it is that not only can society not be identified independently of its effects, it does not *exist* independently of them either. But however strange this is from an ontological point of view,⁵⁰ it raises no special epistemological difficulties.

The chief **epistemological** limit on naturalism is not raised by the necessarily unperceivable character of the objects of social scientific inquiry, but rather by the fact that they only ever manifest themselves in open systems; that is, in systems where invariant empirical regularities do not obtain. For

social systems are not spontaneously, and cannot be experimentally, closed. Now it is as easy to exaggerate the real methodological import of this point, as it is to underestimate its critical significance for the doctrines of received philosophy of science. For, as I have shown in detail elsewhere,⁵¹ practically all the theories of orthodox philosophy of science, and the methodological directives they secrete, presuppose closed systems. Because of this, they are totally inapplicable in the social sciences (which is not of course to say that the attempt cannot be made to apply them—to disastrous effect). Humean theories of causality and law, deductive-nomological and statistical models of explanation, inductivist theories of scientific development and criteria of confirmation, Popperian theories of scientific rationality and criteria of falsification, together with the hermeneutical contrasts parasitic upon them, must all be totally discarded. Social science need only consider them as objects of substantive explanation.

Absence of experiment: (a) inability to *test* hypotheses, but hypotheses can also be validated independently in other ways than experimentally.

The real methodological import of the absence of closed systems is strictly limited: it is that the social sciences are denied, in principle, decisive test situations for their theories. This means that criteria for the rational development and replacement of theories in social science must be *explanatory and non-predictive*. (Particularly important here will be the capacity of a theory (or research programme) to be developed in a *non-ad hoc* way so as to situate, and preferably explain, without strain a possibility once (and perhaps even before) it is realized, when it could never given the openness of the social world, have predicted it.) It should be stressed that this difference has in itself no ontological significance whatsoever. It does not affect the form of laws, which in natural science too must be analysed as tendencies; only the form of our knowledge of them. Moreover, because the mode of application of laws is the same in open and closed systems alike,⁵² there is no reason to suppose that the mode of application of social laws will be any different from natural ones. And although the necessity to rely exclusively on explanatory criteria *may* affect the subjective confidence with which beliefs are held, if a social scientific theory or hypothesis has

been *independently* validated (on explanatory grounds) then one is in principle just as warranted in applying it transfactorially as a natural scientific one. Moreover, given that the problem is typically not *whether* to apply some theory T to the world, but rather *which* out of two or more theories, T , T' , to apply, the degree of our *relative* preference for one theory over another will not be affected by a restriction on the grounds with which that preference must be justified.

Internal relations set constraints on possible theory-construction.

The fact that the subject-matter of the social sciences is both intrinsically historical and structured by relations of internal, as well as external, interdependency sets a constraint upon the kinds of permissible theory-construction. For it may, as argued in the previous section, necessitate reference in principle to conceptions of historically developing totalities. But it does not pose an additional difficulty, over and above the unavailability of closures, for the empirical testing of theories.⁵³

Two reasons why the applicability of measurement is limited: (1) irreversibility leads to inhomogeneity (2) meanings cannot be quantified.

However two significant limits on the possibility of meaningful *measurement* in the social sciences should be noted. The *irreversibility* of ontologically irreducible processes, comparable to entropy in the natural sphere, entails the necessity for concepts of qualitative rather than merely quantitative change.⁵⁴ But the *conceptual* aspect of the subject-matter of the social sciences circumscribes the possibility of measurement in an even more fundamental way.⁵⁵ For meanings cannot be measured, only understood. Hypotheses about them must be expressed in language, and confirmed in dialogue. Language here stands to the conceptual aspect of social science as geometry stands to physics. And precision in meaning now assumes the place of accuracy in measurement as the a posteriori arbiter of theory. It should be stressed that in both cases theories may continue to be justified and validly used to explain, even though *significant* measurement of the phenomena of which they treat has become impossible.

(b) Other aspect of experimental activity: discovery.

Now experimental activity in natural science not only facilitates (relatively)⁵⁶ decisive test situations, it enables *practical access*, as it were, to

the otherwise latent structures of nature. And the malleability achieved in the laboratory may provide an invaluable component in the process of scientific discovery that the social sciences, in this respect, will be denied. However, our analysis of the relational and ontological limits will yield an analogue and a compensator respectively for the role of experimental practice in discovery.

The chief **relational** difference is that the social sciences are part of their own field of inquiry, in principle susceptible to explanation in terms of the concepts and laws of the explanatory theories they employ; so that they are *internal* with respect to their subject-matter in a way in which the natural sciences are not. This necessitates a precision in the sense in which their objects of knowledge can be said to be ‘intransitive’ (see Chapter 1). For it is possible, and indeed likely, given the internal complexity and interdependence of social activities, that these objects may be causally affected by social science, and in some cases not exist independently of it (as for example in the sociology of social science!). Conversely, one would expect social science to be affected or conditioned by developments in what

it patently cannot exist independently of, viz. the rest of society. Thus, whereas, in general, in the natural world the objects of knowledge exist and act independently of the process of the production of the knowledge of which they are the objects, in the social arena this is not so. For the process of knowledge-production may be causally, and internally, related to the process of the production of the objects concerned. However, I want to distinguish such *causal interdependency*, which is a contingent feature of the processes concerned, from *existential intransitivity*, which is an a priori condition of any investigation and applies in the same way in the social, as the natural, sphere. For, although the processes of production may be interdependent, once some object O_t exists, if it exists, however it has been produced, it constitutes a possible object of scientific investigation. And its existence (or not), and properties, are quite independent of the act or process of investigation of which it is the putative object, even though such an investigation, once initiated, may radically modify it. In short, the concept of existence is univocal: 'being' means the same in the human as the natural world, even though the modes of being may radically differ. The

human sciences, then, take intransitive objects like any other. But the categorical properties of such objects differ. And among the most important of these differences is the feature that they are themselves an aspect of, and causal agent in, what they seek to explain. It is vital to be clear about this point. For if it is the characteristic error of positivism to ignore (or play down) interdependency, it is the characteristic error of hermeneutics to dissolve intransitivity. As will be seen, both errors function to the same effect, foreclosing the possibility of scientific critique, upon which the project of human self-emancipation depends.

So far the case for causal interdependency has turned merely on the possibility of a relatively undifferentiated society/social science link. But the case for such a link may be strengthened by noting that just as a social science without a society is impossible, so a society without some kind of scientific, proto-scientific or ideological theory of itself is inconceivable (even if it consists merely in the conceptions that the agents have of what they are doing in their activity). Now if one denotes the proto-scientific set of ideas P , then the transformational model of social activity applied to the activity

of knowledge-production suggests that social scientific theory, T , requiring cognitive resources, is produced, at least in part, by the transformation of P . The hypothesis under consideration is that this transformation will be vitally affected by developments in the rest of society, S .

Transitions and crises give experiment-like situations:

It might be conjectured that in periods of transition or crisis generative structures, previously opaque, become more visible to agents.⁵⁷ And that this, though it never yields quite the epistemic possibilities of a closure (even when agents are self-consciously seeking to transform the social conditions of their existence), does provide a partial analogue to the role played by experimentation in natural science. The conditions for the emergence of a new social scientific theory must of course be distinguished from the conditions for its subsequent development and from the conditions for its permeation into the *Lebenswelt* of lived experience (or incorporation into social policy), though there are evident (and reciprocal) connections between them.⁵⁸ Thus it is surely no accident that Marxism was born in the 1840s or stunted under the combined effects of Stalinism, on the one hand,

and Fascism, the Cold War and the 1945–70 boom, on the other;⁵⁹ or that sociology, in the narrow sense, was the fruit of the two decades before the First World War.⁶⁰

It should be noted that because social systems are open, historicism (in the sense of deductively justified predictability) is untenable. And because of their historical (transformational) character, qualitatively new developments will be occurring which social scientific theory cannot be expected to anticipate. Hence for ontological, as distinct from purely epistemological, reasons, social scientific (unlike natural scientific) theory is *necessarily* incomplete. Moreover as the possibilities inherent in a new social development will often only become apparent long after the development itself, and as each new development is, in a sense, a product of a previous one, we can now see why it is that history must be continually rewritten.⁶¹ There is a relational tie between the development of knowledge and the development of the object of knowledge that any adequate theory of social science, and methodology of social scientific research programmes, must take account

of. In particular, Lakatosian judgements about the progressive or degenerating nature of research programmes⁶² cannot be made in isolation from judgements about developments in the rest of society conditioning work in particular programmes.

About theory construction:

I have argued that once a hypothesis about a generative structure has been produced in social science it can be tested quite empirically, although not necessarily quantitatively, and albeit exclusively in terms of its explanatory power. But I have so far said nothing about how the hypothesis is produced, or indeed about what its status is. Now in considering theory-construction in the social sciences it should be borne in mind that the putative social scientist would, in the absence of some prior theory, be faced with an inchoate mass of (social) phenomena, which she would somehow have to sort out and define. In systems, like social ones, which are necessarily open, the problem of constituting an appropriate (that is, explanatorily significant) object of inquiry becomes particularly acute. It becomes chronic if, as in empirical realism, lacking the concepts of the

stratification and differentiation of the world, one is unable to think the irreducibility of transfactually active structures to events, and the effort, which is science, needed to reveal them. Undifferentiated events then become the object of purely conventionally differentiated sciences, producing a crisis of definitions and boundaries, the existence of a merely arbitrary distinction between a theory and its applications (or the absence of any organic connection between them) and, above all, a problem of verification—or rather falsification. For when *every* theory, if interpreted *empirically*, is false, no theory can ever be falsified.⁶³ Goldmann's claim that 'the fundamental methodological problem of any human science . . . lies in the division [*découpage*] of the object of study . . . [for] once this division has been made and accepted, the results will be practically predictable'⁶⁴ is then not at all surprising.

Role of real definitions:

How, then, given the mishmash nature of social reality, is theory-construction accomplished in social science? Fortunately most of the phenomena with which the social scientist has to deal will already be identified,

thanks to the *concept-dependent* nature of social activities, under certain descriptions. In principle, the descriptions or nominal definitions of social activities that form the transitive objects of social scientific theory may be those of the agents concerned, or theoretical redescriptions of them. The first step in the transformation $P \rightarrow T$ will thus be an attempt at a real definition of a form of social life that has already been identified under a particular description. Note that in the absence of such a definition, and failing a closure, any hypothesis of a causal mechanism is bound to be more or less arbitrary. Thus in social science attempts at real definitions will in general precede rather than follow successful causal hypotheses—though in both cases they can only be justified empirically, viz. by the revealed explanatory power of the hypotheses that can be deduced from them.

↓ Parallels and differences between philosophy and social sciences:

Our problem, then, is shifted from that of how to establish a non-arbitrary procedure for generating causal hypotheses to that of how to establish a non-arbitrary procedure for generating real definitions. And here a second differentiating feature of the subject-matter of the social

sciences should be recalled—the *activity-dependent* nature of social structures, viz. that the mechanisms at work in society exist only in virtue of their effects. In this respect society is quite distinct from other objects of scientific knowledge. But note that, in this, it is analogous to the objects of philosophical knowledge. For just as the objects of philosophical knowledge do not exist apart from the objects of scientific knowledge so social structures do not exist apart from their effects. So, I suggest that in principle as philosophical discourse stands to scientific discourse so a discourse about society stands to a discourse about its effects. Moreover in both cases one is dealing with conceptualized activities whose conditions of possibility or real presuppositions the second-order discourse seeks to explicate. However there are also important differences. For in social scientific discourse one is concerned not to isolate the a priori conditions of a form of knowledge as such, but the particular mechanisms and relations at work in some identified sphere of social life. Moreover its conclusions will be *historical*, not formal; and subject to empirical test, as well as various a priori controls.⁶⁵

Now the substantive employment of an essentially apodeictic procedure should occasion us no surprise. For transcendental arguments are merely a species of which retroductive ones are the genus, distinguished by the features that their *explanandum* consists in the conceptualized activities of agents and, as becomes an arena characterized by a multiplicity of causes, that they isolate necessary not sufficient conditions for it. But in view of this homology are we not in danger of collapsing the philosophy/science distinction upon which I insisted in Chapter 1? No. For the syncategorematic (or, as it were, only proxy-referential) character of the nevertheless irreducible discourse of philosophy (discussed in Chapter 1) has to be contrasted with the directly referential character of social scientific discourse. Hence, though in both cases there are two levels of discourse, in social science there are two levels of reality (social structures, and their effects), whereas in philosophy there is just one, viz. that investigated by science itself. Of course in both cases more than one set of conditions will normally be consistent with the activity concerned, so that supplementary considerations will be needed to establish the validity of the analysis. But in social

science, wherever possible, such considerations will include the provision of independent empirical grounds for the existence (and postulated mode of activity) of the structural mechanisms concerned, whereas, in philosophy, in the nature of the case, this is impossible. Thus a scientific (or substantive) transcendental argument may be distinguished from a philosophical (or formal) one according to the autonomous reality (or lack of it) of the object of the second-order discourse, the way (or rather immediacy) with which reference to the world is secured, and the possibility or otherwise of a posteriori grounds for the analysis.

↓ Now Bhaskar gives examples for formal and substantive use of the transcendental procedure.

Our deduction of the possibility of social scientific knowledge, from the necessary pre-existence of social forms for intentional action, illustrates the formal use of a transcendental procedure. The results of such an analysis may be used both as a critical grid for the assessment of existing social scientific theories and as a template for adequate conceptualizations of social scientific *explananda*. Marx's analysis in *Capital* illustrates the substantive

use of a transcendental procedure. *Capital* may most plausibly be viewed as an attempt to establish what must be the case for the experiences grasped by the phenomenal forms of capitalist life to be possible; setting out, as it were, a pure schema for the understanding of economic phenomena under capitalism, specifying the categories that must be employed in any concrete investigation. I have already suggested that for Marx to understand the essence of some particular social phenomenon is to understand the social relations that make that phenomenon possible. But the transformational model suggests that, to understand the essence of social phenomena as such and in general, such phenomena must be grasped as productions; so that the relations one is concerned with here are, above all, relations of production.

Hermeneutics needs deep ontology.

Now the minor premise of any substantive social scientific transcendental argument will be a social activity as conceptualized in experience. Such a social activity will be in principle *space-time-dependent*. And in the first instance of course it will be conceptualized in the experience of the agents

concerned. It is here that the hermeneutical tradition, in highlighting what may be called the conceptual moment in social scientific work, has made a real contribution. But it typically makes two mistakes. Its continuing commitment to the ontology of empirical realism prevents it from seeing the following:

- (1) The *conditions* for the phenomena (namely social activities as conceptualized in experience) exist *intransitively* and may therefore exist independently of their appropriate conceptualization, and as such be subject to an unacknowledged possibility of historical transformation.
- (2) The *phenomena* themselves may be *false* or in an important sense inadequate (for example, superficial or systematically misleading).

Thus what has been established, by conceptual analysis, as necessary for the phenomena may consist precisely in a level (or aspect) of reality which, although not existing independently of agents' conceptions, may be inadequately conceptualized or even not conceptualized at all. Such a level may consist in a structural complex which is really generative of social life

but unavailable to direct inspection by the senses or immediate intuition in the course of everyday life. It may be a tacit property of agents (such as knowledge of a grammar) utilized in their productions; or a property of the relationships in which agents stand to the conditions and means of their productions, of which they may be unaware.

Leads to critique of consciousness:

Now such a transcendental analysis in social science, in showing (when it does) the historical conditions under which a certain set of categories may be validly applied, *ipso facto* shows the conditions under which they may not be applied. This makes possible a second-order critique of consciousness, best exemplified perhaps by Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism.⁶⁶

↑ Bhaskar calls Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism a 'second-order critique of consciousness.' ↓ Here is Bhaskar's nutshell definition of commodity fetishism:

Value relations, it will be remembered, are real for Marx, but they are historically specific social realities. And fetishism consists in their transformation in thought into the natural, and so ahistorical, qualities of things.

(2) voluntaristic explanation of money.

An alternative type of transformation is identified by Marx in the case of idealistic (rather than naturalistic) explanations of social forms, such as money in the eighteenth century, ‘ascribed a conventional origin’ in ‘the so-called universal consent of mankind’.⁶⁷ The homology between these two types of substantive mystification and the metatheoretical errors of reification and voluntarism should be clear.

(3) False forms: wage.

But, as Geras has pointed out,⁶⁸ Marx employed another concept of mystification, in which he engages in what one may call a first-order critique of consciousness—in which, to put it bluntly, he identifies the phenomena themselves as false; or, more formally, shows that a certain set of categories is not properly applicable to experience at all. This is best exemplified by

his treatment of the wage form, in which the value of labour power is transformed into the value of labour—an expression which Marx declares to be ‘as imaginary as the value of the earth’, ‘as irrational as a yellow logarithm’.⁶⁹ Once more, this mystification is founded on a characteristic category mistake—that, intrinsic to the wage-labour relation, of reducing powers to their exercise, comparable to confusing machines with their use.

(4) Critique of Gotha Programme.

One can also see this categorial error as an instance of the reduction of efficient to material causes, as Marx’s critique of the Gotha Programme⁷⁰ turns on the isolation of the contrary mistake.

More about ideology critique:

Thus, contrary to what is implied in the hermeneutical and neo-Kantian traditions, the transformation $P \rightarrow T$ both (1) isolates real but non-empirical and not necessarily adequately conceptualized conditions and (2) consists essentially, as critique, in two modes of conceptual criticism and change. Now the appellation ‘ideology’ to the set of ideas P is only justified

if their *necessity* can be demonstrated: that is, if they can be explained as well as criticized. This involves something more than just being able to say that the beliefs concerned are false or superficial, which normally entails having a better explanation for the phenomena in question. It involves, in addition, being able to give an account of the *reasons* why the false or superficial beliefs are *held*—a mode of explanation without parallel in the natural sciences. For beliefs, whether about society or nature, are clearly social objects.

Facts and values:

Once this step is taken then conceptual criticism and change pass over into social criticism and change, as, in a possibility unique to social science,⁷¹ the object that renders illusory (or superficial) beliefs necessary comes, at least in the absence of any overriding considerations, to be criticized in being explained; so that the point now becomes, *ceteris paribus*, to change it. Indeed in the full development of the concept of ideology, theory fuses into practice, as facts about values, mediated by theories about facts, are transformed into values about facts. The rule of value-neutrality, the

last shibboleth in the philosophy of the social sciences, collapses, when we come to see that values themselves can be false.

At the beginning of this section I distinguished epistemological and relational limits on naturalism from the ontological ones immediately derived from the transformational model of social activity. But a moment's reflection shows that these limits may be derived from that model too. For the historical and interdependent character of social activities implies that the social world must be open, and the requirement that social activity be socially explained implies that social science is a part of its own subject-matter. Similarly, it is not difficult to see that the application of the transformational model to beliefs and cognitive material generally implies commitment to a principle of epistemic relativity,⁷² and that this lends to moral and political argument in particular something of a necessarily transitional and open character.⁷³

Our deduction of the possibility of naturalism in the social sciences is complete, although we have still to explore an important range of consequences of it. Society is not given in, but presupposed by, experience.

However, it is precisely its peculiar ontological status, its transcendently real character, that makes it a possible object of knowledge for us. Such knowledge is non-natural but still scientific. The transformational model implies that social activities are historical, interdependent and interconnected. The law-like statements of the social sciences will thus typically designate historically restricted tendencies operating at a single level of the social structure only. Because they are defined for only one relatively autonomous component of the social structure, and because they act in systems that are always open, they designate tendencies (such as for the rates of profit on capitalist enterprises to be equalized) which may never be manifested, but which are nevertheless essential to the understanding (and the changing) of the different forms of social life, just because they are really productive of them. Society is not a mass of separable events and sequences. But neither is it constituted by the concepts that we attach to our physiological states. Rather it is a complex and causally efficacious whole—a totality, which is being continually transformed in practice. As an object of study it can neither be read straight off a given world nor

reconstructed from our subjective experiences. But, although empirical realism cannot think it, in this respect at least it is on a par with the objects of study in the natural sciences too.

7. Social Science as Critique: Facts, Values and Theories

The generally accepted, and in my opinion essentially correct, interpretation of Hume, is that he enunciated what has—at least since Moore's *Principia Ethica*—become an article of faith for the entire analytical tradition, namely that the transition from 'is' to 'ought', factual to value statements, indicatives to imperatives, is, although frequently made (and perhaps even, like eduction, psychologically necessary), logically inadmissible.⁷⁴ I want to argue that, on the contrary, it is not only acceptable but mandatory, provided only that minimal criteria for the characterization of a belief system as 'ideological' are satisfied.

For the anti-naturalist tradition in ethics, then, there is a fundamental logical gulf between statements of what *is* (has been or will be) the case and statements of what *ought* to be the case. It follows from this, first, that

no factual proposition can be derived from any value judgement (or, more generally, that any factual conclusion depends upon premises containing at least (and normally more than) one factual proposition); and second, that no value judgement can be derived from any factual proposition (or, more generally, that any value conclusion depends upon premises containing at least one value judgement). Accordingly, social science is viewed as neutral in two respects: first, in that its propositions are logically independent of, and cannot be derived from, any value position; second, in that value positions are logically independent of, and cannot be derived from, any social scientific proposition. I shall write these two corollaries of ‘Hume’s Law’ as follows:

- (1) $V \not\leftrightarrow F$
- (2) $F \not\leftrightarrow V$

It is important to keep (1) and (2) distinct. For it is now often conceded that the facts are in some sense tainted by, or contingent upon, our values.

But whatever doubt is cast upon (1), (2) is still deemed canonical. That is, it is still held that the findings of social science are consistent with any value-position; so that even if social science cannot be value-free, social values remain effectively *science-free*. It is of course accepted that science may be used instrumentally in the pursuit of moral ideals, political goals, etc., but science cannot help to determine the latter. We remain free in the face of science to adopt any value-position. ‘Keep Science out of Politics (Morality, etc.)’ could be the watchword here.

↓ Note that Collier criticizes the two-sided approach taken here by Bhaskar. Collier says that Bhaskar should have concentrated on the connection from facts to values.

My primary argument is against (2). But I reject (1) as well; that is, I accept the thesis of the value-dependency of (social) facts, and will consider it first. It will be seen, however, that without a rejection of axis (2) of the dichotomy, criticism directed at axis (1), or its implications, must remain largely ineffectual. And my aim will be to show how theory, by throwing into relief the (ever-diminishing) circle in which facts and values move, can

presage its transformation into an (expanding) explanatory/emancipatory spiral.

(1) has been criticized from the standpoint of the subjectivity of both (a) the *subject* and (b) the *object* of investigation (as well as, more obliquely, in the hermeneutical, critical and dialectical traditions from the standpoint of (c) the *relationship* between the two). Thus to consider (a) first, it has been argued that the social values of the scientist (or the scientific community) determine (i) the selection of problems; (ii) the conclusions; and even (iii) the standards of inquiry (for example by Weber, Myrdal and Mannheim respectively).

(i) is often treated as uncontroversial; in fact, it embodies a serious muddle. It is most usually associated with Weber's doctrine that although social science could and must be *value-free*, it had nevertheless to be *value-relevant*.⁷⁵ Crudely summarized, Weber's position was that because of the infinite variety of empirical reality, the social scientist had to make a choice of what to study. Such a choice would necessarily be guided by his or her values, so that s/he would choose to study precisely those aspects of reality

to which s/he attached cultural significance, which thereby became the basis for the construction of 'ideal-types'. Now this is doubly misleading. For, on the one hand, the natural world is similarly complex; and, on the other, aspects of the work of the natural sciences are equally motivated by practical interests. In fact, one needs to make a distinction between the pure and the applied (or practical) natural sciences. In pure science choice of the properties of an object to study is motivated by the search for explanatory mechanisms;⁷⁶ in applied science it may be motivated by the industrial, technological, medical or more generally socio-cultural significance of the properties. Thus while it is practical interests which determine which out of the infinite number of possible compounds of carbon are studied,⁷⁷ it is theoretical interests which motivate the identification of its electronic structure. Weber's neo-Kantianism misleads him into substituting the distinction *natural/social* for the distinction *pure/applied*. There is nothing in the infinite variety of the surface of the social cosmos to necessitate a difference in principle in the structure of the search for explanatory mechanisms. Nor, *pace* Habermasians, is an interest in emancipation something

with which one has to *preface* that search, although, as I shall argue shortly, explanatory social science necessarily has emancipatory implications.⁷⁸ At a deeper level, any doctrine of value-relevance (or knowledge-constitutive-interests) also suffers from the defect that it leaves the *source* of the values (or interests) unexplained.

(ii) is altogether more powerful. The underlying notion at work is that social science is so inextricably ‘bound up’ with its subject-matter that its interest in it will affect, and (if some concept of objectivity—relational or otherwise—is retained) distort, its perception, description or interpretation of it. Examples of such affecting/distorting are readily available.⁷⁹ It is clear that (ii) rests on an epistemological premise, viz. that of the internality of social science with respect to its subject-matter, together with a psychological or sociological one, asserting the practical impossibility of making the analytical separation the positivist enjoins on the social scientist. And it posits, with respect to the claim made in (1) above, an *interference* between the subject’s interests in the object and its knowledge of it.

Now it is vital to distinguish three ways in which such interference could operate. It could operate *consciously* (as in lying); it could operate *semi-consciously* (as in the wishful thinking of the incurable optimist or the special pleading of a pressure group); or it could operate *unconsciously* (whether or not it can become accessible to consciousness). It is only the third case that raises serious difficulties for (1). I want to distinguish the case where the conclusions of such an unconscious mode of ‘interference’ are *rationalizations* of motivation from the case where they constitute *mystifications* (or ideologies) of social structure. In either case the interference may be regarded as necessary or as contingent upon a particular set of psychic or social circumstances.

Recognition of the phenomena of rationalization and mystification as the effects of unconscious interference enables us to pinpoint the error in an influential ‘solution’ to the problem of ‘value-bias’, authorized *inter alia* by Myrdal.⁸⁰ On this solution, recognizing that value-neutrality is impossible, all the social scientist needs to do is state his or her own value assumptions fully and explicitly at the beginning of some piece of work so

as to put the reader (and possibly also the writer) on their guard. It is not difficult to see that this solution begs the question. For it presupposes that X knows what his or her values are; that is, it presupposes that s/he has the kind of knowledge about him- or herself that *ex hypothesi*, in virtue of unconscious interference, s/he cannot have about society. Now for X to have such knowledge about him- or herself, s/he would have had to become fully conscious of the formerly unconscious mode of interference, in which case a statement of value assumptions is *unnecessary*, because objectivity is now possible. Conversely, if X is not conscious of the (unconscious) mode of interference, then any statement of his or her (professed) value assumptions will be *worthless*. Moreover, one cannot say in general whether any such statement will be more or less misleading. (Thus consider, for instance, what often follows professions of the kind ‘I’m not prejudiced about ...’ or ‘I’m a tolerant sort of person/true liberal/good democrat ...’) *Mutatis mutandis*, similar considerations apply in the case of conscious and semi-conscious modes of interference: avowals are either unnecessary or potentially misleading.

(iii) posits a relativity in the methodological norms secreted by different conceptual schemes or paradigms, together with a value-dependence of such conceptual schemes of the sort already discussed under (ii). I want to consider it *pari passu* with the general problem of relativism, of which it is just a special case. Two objections to relativism are regularly trotted out: first, that it is self-refuting; second, that it denies what we do in fact do, for example translate, make cross-cultural comparisons, etc.⁸¹

The argument for the self-refuting character of relativism is easily refuted. The argument asserts that if all beliefs are relative, then there can be no good grounds for relativism; hence one has no reason to accept it. Conversely, if one has reason to accept it, then at least one belief is not relative; so that relativism is false. Now this argument confuses two distinct theses (which are indeed typically confused by pro- as well as anti-relativists). The first is the correct thesis of *epistemic relativity*, which asserts that all beliefs are socially produced, so that all knowledge is transient, and neither truth-values nor criteria of rationality exist outside historical time. The other is the incorrect thesis of *judgemental relativism*, which asserts that

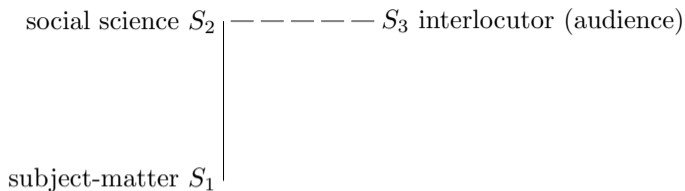
all beliefs (statements) are equally valid, in the sense that there can be no (rational) grounds for preferring one to another. Denying the principle of epistemic relativity inevitably entails embracing some type of epistemological *absolutism* (which, by a short route, invariably results in some kind of idealism), while acceptance of judgemental relativism inevitably leads to some or other form of *irrationalism*. Epistemic relativity is entailed both by ontological realism⁸² and by the transformational conception of social activity: it respects a distinction between the sense and reference of propositions, while insisting that all speech acts are made in historical time. Such a principle neither entails nor (even if any were logically possible) gives grounds for a belief in the doctrine of judgemental relativism. On the contrary, it is clear that if one is to act at all there must be grounds for preferring one belief (about some domain) to another; and that such activity in particular practices is typically codifiable in the form of systems of *rules*, implicitly or explicitly followed.

The anti-relativist argument may now be refuted. Epistemic relativism is a particular belief (about the totality of beliefs). Like any belief (including its contrary), it arises under, and is (analytically) only comprehensible, and therefore only acceptable, under definite historical conditions. Epistemic relativism is certainly comprehensible to us. And it is clear that there are in fact excellent grounds, both transcendental and empirical, for accepting it, and denying its contrary. (Of course if, on some inter-galactic voyage, we were to unearth some 'World 3' or world of timeless forms, in which it could be shown that our knowledge had been all the while participating, then we should certainly revise this judgement and accept some form of absolutism!)

Turning to the second objection to relativism, the undeniable fact that we can translate, etc., no more proves the existence of neutral languages or absolute standards than our interaction with lions proves that they can talk.⁸³ Whorf's hypothesis is not refuted by the existence of appropriate bilinguals (or it could never have been consistently formulated); any more than the *psychological* capacity of a physicist to understand both

Newtonian and Einsteinian theory indicates that they are not *logically* incommensurable; or our ability to see a drawing as either a duck or a rabbit shows that there must be a way of seeing it as both at once. I will return to the special problems raised by the notion of our understanding other cultures and other times in Chapter 4.

Arguments of type (b) turn not on the ‘value-bias’ of social science, but on the ‘value-impregnation’ of its subject-matter. They typically depend upon the fact that the subject-matter of social science is itself in part constituted by, or indeed just consists in, values or things to which the agents themselves attach (or have attached for them) value, that is, objects of value. Presumably no one would wish to deny this. The point only becomes a threat to (1) if it is established that the value-dependency of the subject-matter of social science makes it impossible or illegitimate to perform the required analytical separation in social scientific discourse. (For it is clear that one might be able to describe values in a value-free way.) If one represents the subject-matter of social science by S_1 and social science by S_2 as in the diagram below the claim is that the nature of



S_1 is such that, in virtue of its value-impregnation, either no description in L_2 satisfies (1), or at least the best or most adequate scientific description in L_2 does not satisfy (1). (This may be held to be a necessary, normal or occasional state of affairs.)

The significance of the fact that one is here concerned with questions of *descriptive* (and more generally scientific) *adequacy* may best be introduced by considering a famous example of Isaiah Berlin's. Thus compare the following accounts of what happened in Germany under Nazi rule: (α) 'the country was depopulated'; (β) 'millions of people died'; (γ) 'millions

of people were killed'; (δ) 'millions of people were massacred'. All four statements are true. But (δ) is not only the most evaluative, it is also the best (that is, the most precise and accurate) description of what actually happened. And note that, in virtue of this, all but (δ) generate the wrong perlocutionary force. For to say of someone that he died normally carries the presumption that he was *not* killed by human agency. And to say that millions were killed does not imply that their deaths were part of a single organized campaign of brutal killing, as those under Nazi rule were. This point is important. For social science is not only *about* a subject matter, it is *for* an audience. That is, it is always in principle a party to a triadic relationship, standing to an actual or possible interlocutor (S_3) as a potential source of (mis-/dis-) information, explanation, justification, etc. Now I want to argue that, even abstracting from perlocutionary considerations, criteria for the scientific adequacy of descriptions are such that in this kind of case only the (δ) statement is acceptable.

QUESTION 13. *Why is it misleading to say that millions of people died under the Hitler regime?*

If one denotes some social phenomenon in S_1 as ' P_1 ', then the most adequate description of P_1 in L_2 will be that description—let us call it D_2^* —(with whatever evaluative components it incorporates) entailed by that theory T^* (formulated in L_2) with the *maximum explanatory power* (including of course the power, wherever possible, to explain descriptions of P_1 in S_1). In general the attainment of hermeneutic adequacy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for generating the appropriate description D_2^* . Indeed if the hermeneutically adequate description is D_2^0 ; and its target in L_1 is D_1^0 , then whether or not $D_2^* = D_2^0$ is contingent. And the susceptibility of D_1^0 to scientific *critique* is exactly reflected in the *process* of description, explanation and redescription that, as has been noted in Chapter 1, characterizes scientific activity at any one level or stratum of reality. (This process is of course implicit in the transformational model, with the relevant ruptural point being the identification of the operative explanatory structure.) Such a process respects the *authenticity* of D_1^0 , but does not regard it as an incorrigible datum.⁸⁴ So that although the achievement of *Verstehen* is, in virtue of the concept-dependence of social

structures, a condition for social science, the process of social science does not leave the initial descriptions—either in L_2 or in principle in L_1 —intact. In short, just as natural science has no foundations, there are no foundations of social knowledge—scientific or lay.

It is important to note that commitment to a principle of hermeneutic adequacy as a moment in social science is not only consistent with a subsequent critique of the *verstehende* description, it itself stands in need of supplementation by semiotic analysis. For the hermeneutic mediation of meanings (or fusion of horizons) must be complemented by consideration of the question posed by semiotics as to how such meanings (horizons, etc.) are produced. (Of course such a question must itself be expressed in a language, so that the process mediation-analysis is an iterative one.) Now if, following Saussure, one regards meanings as produced by, as it were, cutting into pre-existing systems of difference,⁸⁵ then in science our cut must be made so as to maximize total explanatory power. And another type of critique—a *metacritique* of L_1 —becomes possible if it can be shown that L_1 (or some relevant subsystem of it) is such that the adequate representation

of P_1 in L_1 is impossible. This concern with the production of meaning corresponds exactly to the attentiveness shown in the natural sciences to the construction of instruments and equipment; so that one can say that if the hermeneutic moment corresponds (with respect to the conceptual aspect of social life) to observation, then the semiotic one corresponds to instrumentation in the empirical work of the natural sciences.

Now of course it does not follow that commitment to a principle of hermeneutic adequacy will automatically result in the replication in L_2 of the evaluative components in D_1^0 ; nor does the production of D_2^0 itself imply any value commitment. The question is rather whether the scientifically adequate description D_2^* breaks the rule of value-neutrality. Where it constitutes a critique of D_1^0 it does so necessarily. For to show that agents are systematically deluded about the nature of their activity is (logically) impossible without passing the judgement that D_1^0 is false; and ' D_1^0 is false' is not a value-neutral statement. Strictly speaking, this is sufficient for the purposes of our argument. For we require only to show that S_1 is such that in social science value-neutral descriptions are not always possible. But it

is worth dwelling on the point in its more general aspect. Our problem is to utilize the powers of L_2 so as to maximize our understanding in L_2 of S_1 . L_2 is the only language we can use. And the terms we use to describe human behaviour will be terms which function *inter alia* regulatively and evaluatively in S_2 : these are the only terms we can, without parody or satire, use; and we cannot dislocate them from their living context without misrepresenting as lifeless the context they are employed to describe. Hence just as to define a foetus as an unborn human being is already to load the debate on abortion in a certain way, so to attempt to construct an index of fascism comparable to that of anaemia⁸⁶ is both absurd (because the elements of a fascist state are internally related) and value-laden (because it functions so as to remove from our purview, in science, precisely that range of its implications internally related to objects that we value, such as human life). In short, not to call a spade a spade, in any human society, is to misdescribe it.

Now Bhaskar switches to the other side: can values flow from facts?

Positivist dogma (1) must thus be rejected both on the grounds that it ignores the subject's interest in the object and on the grounds that the nature of the object is such that criteria for descriptive (and more generally scientific) adequacy entail at least the possibility of irreducibly evaluative descriptions. Criticism of (1) however leaves the questions of the determination, and non-instrumental justification, of values unresolved. Moreover, by making facts partially dependent upon values (and leaving value-choice undetermined) a seemingly inevitable element of arbitrariness is introduced into the scientific process. Indeed there seems no reason why, in the light of our special interests, we should not generate whatever facts we please. In order to forestall such a radical conventionalism, let us cross to the other side of the divide, viz. (2), and see if science has any implications for values; if one can break into the circle here. Before offering my own account of the matter, I want to discuss two recent attempts to break down the fact/value distinction along the axis denied in (2).

↓ First such attempt: Charles Taylor

Charles Taylor, in an important article,⁸⁷ shows clearly how theories (or ‘explanatory frameworks’) do in fact secrete values. The structure of his argument may be represented as follows:

$$(3) \quad T \leftrightarrow F \rightarrow V$$

Unfortunately, however, by failing to specify any criterion for choosing between theories, he leaves himself open to the interpretation that one should choose that theory which most satisfies our conception of what ‘fulfills human needs, wants and purposes’;⁸⁸ rather than that theory which, just *because it is explanatorily most adequate* and capable *inter alia* of explaining illusory beliefs about the social world, best allows us to situate the possibilities of change in the value direction that the theory indicates. He thus merely displaces, rather than transcends, the traditional fact/value dichotomy. Alternatively, one might attempt to interpret Taylor as arguing that one ought to opt for the theory that secretes the best value-position, because theories tend to be acted upon and human needs are the independent (or at least chief) variable in social explanation.⁸⁹ But this involves a

dubious set of propositions, including a substantive scheme of explanation with voluntaristic implications.

↓ Second attempt: J.R. Searle:

Searle's attempted derivation of 'ought' from 'is', where the critical 'is' statement is a statement describing institutional facts (that is, facts constituted by systems of rules), turns on the existence of a series of connections between saying 'I promise', being under an obligation and it being the case that one ought to do what one is under an obligation to do.⁹⁰ The structure of Searle's argument may be represented as:

$$(4) \quad I.F. \rightarrow V$$

↓ Criticisms of Searle in the literature:

It has been criticized (for example by Hare) on the grounds that the institutional facts upon which it rests merely encapsulate general moral principles, and (for example by Flew) on the grounds that the mere utterance of words does not imply the kind of commitment that alone warrants a normative conclusion.

↓ Bhaskar's view of these criticisms:

Now it is certainly the case that the mere fact that one acts within an institution in such a way that one's action would not be possible but for its constitutive rules, does not imply a moral (as distinct from a motivational, or purely instrumental) commitment to it. Otherwise it would be logically impossible to be a socialist within a capitalist society, or a libertarian within a totalitarian one. Promising is an institution within a network of institutions which one might decide, on moral grounds,⁹¹ either to opt out of or merely 'play' (sincerely or insincerely). A society of discursive intelligences where promising is regarded rather as Americans regard cricket, is, although perhaps not very attractive, certainly conceivable—in a way in which a society not subject to norms of truth, consistency and coherence is not. To derive a morally unrevocable (*ceteris paribus*) 'ought' from an 'is' one has to move from premises which are constitutive of purely factual discourse, which are transcendently necessary.

↓ Now Bhaskar's own views how facts can lead to values:

My argument, it is important to note, does not permit a simple inference from facts to values. It turns, rather, on the capacity of a *theory* to explain false consciousness, and in particular on the capacity of a theory to allow the satisfaction of minimal criteria for the characterization of a system of beliefs as *ideological*. (Fuller criteria will be elaborated in the appendix to this chapter.) Now it will be remembered that I argued in the last section that one is only justified in characterizing a set of ideas *P* as ‘ideological’ if both (a) *P* is false, that is, one possesses a superior explanation for the phenomena in question; and (b) *P* is more or less contingently (conjuncturally) necessary, that is, one possesses an explanation of the falsity of the beliefs in question.

↑ This last clause seems a writing error: Necessity does not mean that the beliefs in question are false, but that an explanation can be given why they are held.

QUESTION 14. *In critical realism, it is possible that values flow from facts. I.e., values are not subjective attitudes but certain things are objectively bad. For instance, capitalism is, in this paradigm, objectively bad. How does critical realism argue that capitalism is bad?*

↓ Now two clarifying comments:

It should be noted that the necessity one is dealing with here may only be the necessity for *some* illusion, rather than any *particular* one; and that, where (as in the case of myths about nature) *different* theories are required for the satisfaction of (a) and (b), they must at least be consistent with one another. One can write these criteria as follows:

$$(a) \qquad T > P$$

$$(b) \qquad T \exp I(P)$$

↓ An action which is based on a false belief can be criticized; but a social order that necessitates false beliefs can be criticized as well:

Now to criticize a belief as false is *ipso facto* not only to criticize any action or practice informed or sustained by that belief, but also anything that necessitates it. In social science this will be precisely the object that renders illusory (or superficial) beliefs, along any of the dimensions of mystification already indicated in the last section, necessary. The structure of my argument may be represented as:

$$(5) \quad T > P.T \exp I(P) \rightarrow -V(O \rightarrow I(P))$$

Of course this only entails the imperative ‘change it’ if change is possible and in the absence of overriding considerations. But that is the case with *any* valuation (for example, smoking is harmful).⁹²

If, then, one is in possession of a theory which explains why false consciousness is necessary, one can pass immediately, without the addition of any extraneous value judgements, to a negative evaluation of the object (generative structure, system of social relations or whatever) that makes that consciousness necessary (and, *ceteris paribus*, to a positive evaluation

of action rationally directed at the removal of the sources of false consciousness). Might it not be objected, however, that the fact/value distinction only breaks down in this way because one is committed to the prior valuation that truth is a good, so that one is not deriving a value judgement from entirely factual (natural) premises? But that truth *is* a good (*ceteris paribus*) is not only a condition of moral discourse, it is a condition of any discourse at all. Commitment to truth and consistency apply to factual as much as to value discourse; and so cannot be seized upon as a concealed (value) premise to rescue the autonomy of values from factual discourse, without destroying the distinction between the two, the distinction that it is the point of the objection to uphold.

↑↑ Any scientific argument rests on the premise that truth is good. This premise is therefore not something that distinguishes the above derivation of values from facts from other scientific arguments.

Given that clear paradigms exist of the form of explanation represented by (5), can a case be made out for supposing such an explanation-form to be transcendently necessary? Now it is evident that there can be no

action without beliefs, and no beliefs save by work on or with other beliefs, so that judgements of falsity are transcendently necessary. Further, it is clear that it is only if an agent can *explain* a belief that s/he can set out to rationally *change* it, in the case where it is not susceptible to direct criticism. Now if beliefs are not to be given a totally voluntaristic explanation; if they are at all recalcitrant—like the rest of the social structure (as is implied by their internality to it); or if a sociology of knowledge is to be possible and necessary (and one is already implicit in lay practice); then the form of ideological explanation schematized in (5) is *a condition of every rational praxis*. Put informally, the possibility of coming to say to another or oneself ‘now this is why you (I) erroneously believe such-and-such’ is a presupposition of any rational discourse or authentic act of self-reflection at all.

Ceteris paribus, then, truth, consistency, coherence, rationality, etc., are good, and their opposites bad, precisely because commitment to them are conditions of the possibility of discourse in general. Now it is certainly the case that to say of some belief *P* that it is illusory is *ceteris paribus*

(henceforth *CP*) to imply that it is detrimental to the achievement of human goals and the satisfaction of human wants. But it is not *because* of this, on the argument I have advanced, that *P* is bad. Of course science is not the only human activity, or the most important (in an explanatory sense). Further, just as the values it encapsulates may be undermined in certain kinds of societies, so they may be overridden by other values. However, such overriding cannot consistently be argued to be either necessarily or even normally warranted. Moreover it is only by reference to social scientific (and psychological) theories that an infinite regress of values can be avoided and questions of ultimate values resolved (as of course in practice they always—implicitly or explicitly—are). Different ‘highest-order’ explanatory theories will contain their own conception of what kinds of social organization are possible and of what human beings essentially are (or can become). The most powerful explanatory theory, by situating the greatest range of real (non-Utopian) possibilities, will increase our rational autonomy of action. But it is a mistake of the greatest magnitude to suppose

that, in Laplacean fashion, it will tell us what to do. The most powerful explanatory theory in an open world is a non-deterministic one.

Aside from this, science, although it can and must illuminate them, cannot finally ‘settle’ questions of practical morality and action, just because there are always—and necessarily—social practices besides science, and values other than cognitive ones; because, to adapt a famous metaphor of Neurath’s, while we mend the boat, we still need to catch fish in the sea. On the other hand, once we break from the contemplative standpoint of traditional epistemology and conceive human beings as engaged in practical and material activity, and not just thinking and perceiving, it becomes difficult to see how (2) could have held philosophers in thrall for so long. For we can certainly derive technical imperatives from theoretical premises alone (subject to a *CP* clause).⁹³ Moreover, to criticize a belief or theory is *ipso facto* to criticize any action informed, or practice sustained, by that belief or theory, so that even at level (a) of (5) we pass directly to practical imperatives. But to stop there is to halt at ‘that kind of criticism which knows how to judge and condemn the present, but not how to comprehend

it'.⁹⁴ To move beyond such criticism we need to reveal the object that makes false consciousness necessary, in a moment—level (*b*) of (5)—which I have called ‘critique’. Once we have accomplished this, we have then done as much as science alone can do for society and people. And the point becomes to transform them.

8. Appendix: A Note on the Marxist Concept of Ideology

It is not my intention here to provide a full treatment of the Marxist concept of ideology, but rather merely to consider two problems associated with it. The first concerns the location of ideology (and science) within the topography of historical materialism; the second concerns the criteria for the characterization of beliefs as ‘ideological’, and specifically for distinguishing ideology from science.

8.A. Sciences and Ideologies in Historical Materialism. In the work of the mature Marx the concept of ideology has a double designation: on the one hand, it is assigned to the superstructure to be explained in terms of the base; and on the other, it forms part of the analysis of the

base itself, most notably in the figure of commodity fetishism. Now this double designation, not to say schism, in the thematization of the concept of ideology within Marxism itself reflects a historical fact of some importance. Marx inaugurated two distinct research programmes: an economic theory, or critique, of the capitalist mode of production, elaborated above all in *Capital*; and a theory of history, historical materialism, sketched, for example, in the famous 1859 Preface and put to work in a few justly celebrated conjunctural analyses. But he never satisfactorily integrated the two. (One symptom of this is the absence, in his mature work, of any theory of capitalist *society*.) And it was left to Engels, and subsequent Marxists, following their own intuitions and Marx's clues, to try to resolve the problems engendered by this original cleavage within Marxism.

Foremost among such problems is of course that of reconciling the thesis of the relative autonomy and specific efficacy of the various superstructures (however individuated and enumerated) with that of their determination in the last instance by the base (however identified and defined)—see n.

43 below. In general terms Marxists have long recognized two errors: *idealism*, dislocation of a superstructure from the base (or the totality); and *reductionism* (or economism), reduction of a superstructure to a mechanical effect or epiphenomenon of the base (or to an expression of the totality). Now if one places science within society, as one surely must, these opposed errors can be identified in the works of Althusser in the mid-1960s (in his so-called ‘theoreticist’ phase) and of the early Lukács respectively. Thus for Althusser science is effectively *completely* autonomous,⁹⁵ while for Lukács it tends to be merely an *expression* of (the reification intrinsic to) capitalist society.⁹⁶ Lysenkoism, in which science is conceived as a mechanical function of the economic base, is an *economistic* variant of reductionism.⁹⁷

This problem of simultaneously avoiding economic reductionism and theoretical idealism has a direct counterpart on the plane of ideology. For, on the one hand, there is, in *Capital*, a theory of false or superficial economic ideas, which cannot just be extrapolated (without detailed independent investigations) into a general theory of ideas-in-capitalist-society.

And, on the other hand, if historical materialism is to mark any advance over empiricist sociology and historiography, it must presumably provide a framework for accounting for legal, political, cultural, religious, philosophical and scientific ideas as well as economic ones. Specifically, I want to suggest that (1) ideas cannot just be lumped together and assigned in an undifferentiated bloc to the category of superstructure; and (2) all activity, including purely economic activity, necessarily has an ideational component or aspect (as the 1st Thesis on Feuerbach implies), that is to say, it is unthinkable except in so far as the agent has a conception of what s/he is doing and why s/he is doing it (in which of course s/he may be mistaken). The critique of idealism developed in *The German Ideology* consists: firstly, in the rejection of the Hegelian notion of the autonomous existence of the ideal;⁹⁸ and secondly, in the assertion of the primacy of the material over the ideal.⁹⁹

But however precisely the latter claim is to be interpreted, Marx can hardly be plausibly committed to a materialist inversion of Hegel on the first count, viz. as asserting the autonomous existence of the material in

social life. Thus the crude distinction economic base/ideological superstructure must be rejected and replaced instead by a conception of the *different ideologies* associated with the *different practices*, including both scientific practices and the practices identified, in any particular formation, as basic. Of course these ideologies will stand in various relations to one another, and sometimes reveal striking homologies and straightforward functionalities. But this way of looking at ideologies leaves open their nature and relations for substantive scientific investigation. Moreover, it allows both that the various practices may have different, and varying, degrees of autonomy from the base; and that in some cases (physics, technology, literature, warfare) the practices concerned may have relatively autonomous bases of their own.¹⁰⁰

In its classical tradition, Marxism has conceived ideologies as systems of false beliefs, arising in response to the objective conditions of material existence and as playing an essential role in reproducing (and/or transforming) social relations of production. Typically, moreover, it has opposed ideology to science; and science has been conceived, at least by Marx, Engels and

Lenin, as a weapon in the emancipation of the working class. Ideology is categorially false consciousness, grounded in the existence of a particular historically contingent form of (class) society and serving the interests of a system of domination (at root, class domination) intrinsic to it. Now, as Poulantzas has noted, the only fully worked out theory of ideology in Marxism is in Marx's critique of political economy; so it is to this that we must turn in considering what is involved in the Marxist notion of a critique, and the counterposition of ideology to science.

8.B. Science v. Ideology in the Critique of Political Economy.

I suggest that a system of beliefs I may be characterized as 'ideological', within this conceptual lineage, if and only if three types of criteria—which I shall call critical, explanatory and categorial—are satisfied. To consider the *critical* criteria first, in order to designate I as 'ideological' one must be in possession of a theory (or a consistent set of theories) T which can do the following:

- (1) Explain most, or most significant, phenomena, under its own descriptions, explained by I (under I 's descriptions, where these are 'incommensurable' with those of T).
- (2) Explain in addition a significant set of phenomena not explained by I .

To satisfy the *explanatory* criteria for the designation of I as 'ideological', T must be able to do the following:

- (3) Explain the reproduction of I (that is, roughly, the conditions for its continued acceptance by agents) and, if possible, specify the limits of I and the (endogenous) conditions for its transformation (if any), specifically:
- (3') In terms of a real stratification or connection (that is, a level of structure or set of relations) described in T but altogether absent from or obscured in I .
- (4) Explain, or at least situate, itself within itself.

Finally, to satisfy the *categorical* criteria for the designation of I as 'ideological', I must be *unable* to satisfy either of the following:

- (5) A criterion of scientificity, specifying the minimum necessary conditions for the characterization of a production as scientific; or
- (6) A criterion of domain-adequacy, specifying the minimum necessary conditions for a theory to sustain the historical or social (or whatever) nature of its subject-matter.

And T must be able to satisfy both.

(1) and (2) explicate the sense in which T is cognitively superior to I .¹⁰¹ But (3') assigns to T a specific type of cognitive superiority. It possesses an ontological depth or totality that I lacks. (3) demarcates social scientific from natural scientific explanation. The condition that beliefs about phenomena, as well as phenomena, are to be explained derives from the internality of social theories with respect to their subject-matter (see p. 47). And this of course also indicates the desirability of the satisfaction of a criterion of reflexivity, viz. (4). It should perhaps be stressed that one is *only* justified in characterizing a system of beliefs as 'ideological' if one is in possession of a theory that can explain them. The categorial criteria (5) and (6) presuppose of course that T , or some metatheory consistent with

it, specifies the appropriate conditions (as has been done here in Chapters 1 and 2 respectively). For Marx classical political economy satisfied (5), but not properly speaking (6), in virtue of the category mistakes, such as that of fetishism, in which it was implicated. But vulgar economy did not even satisfy (5). Finally, it should be noted that, traditionally, theoretical ideologies have been distinguished from the forms of consciousness they reflect, or rationalize (or otherwise defend); so that within the analysis of any 'I' an internal differentiation with respect to discursive level will be necessary. Now let us put this formal apparatus to work on *Capital*.

Capital is subtitled 'a critical analysis of capitalist production'. It is at one and the same time a critique of bourgeois political economy; a critique of the economic conceptions of everyday life that, according to Marx, bourgeois political economy merely reflects or rationalizes; and a critique of the mode of production that renders these conceptions necessary for the agents engaging in it. It is the structure of this triple critique that provides the key to the analysis of ideology in Marx's mature economic writings.

QUESTION 15. *Marx's Capital is a triple critique. Explain.*

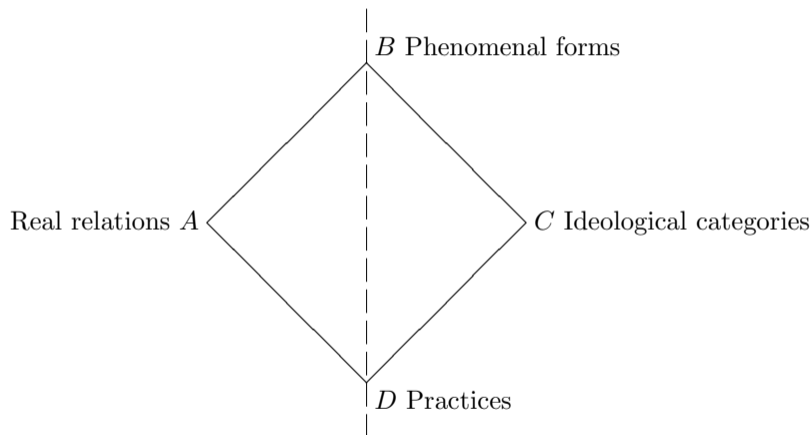
For Marx vulgar economy merely reflects the phenomenal forms of bourgeois life. It does not penetrate to the essential reality that produces these forms.¹⁰² But it is not just laziness or scientific 'bad faith' that accounts for this. For the phenomenal forms that are reflected or rationalized in ideology actually mask the real relations that generate them. As Godelier has put it: 'it is not the subject who deceives himself [nor, one might add, is it any other subject—be it individual, group or class], but *reality* [that is, the structure of society] that deceives [or better, produces the deception in] him'.¹⁰³ Marx's project is thus to discover the mechanisms by which capitalist society necessarily appears to its agents as something other than it really is; that is, of its specific opacity. And inasmuch as he succeeds in this task, showing these forms to be both false *and* necessary, *Capital's* status as a triple critique is explained (and its right to its subtitle fully justified).

I noted above (p. 52) how fetishism, by *naturalizing* value, *dehistoricizes* it. Its social function is thus to conceal the historically specific class relationships that underlie the surface phenomena of circulation and exchange. Now the wage form, in confusing the value of labour and the value of labour power, reduces *powers* to their *exercise*. Its social function is thus to conceal the reality, in the process of capitalist production, of unpaid labour (the source of surplus value). And as Marx says, ‘if history took a long time to get to the bottom of the mystery of wages, nothing is easier than to understand the necessity, the *raison d’être* of this phenomenon’.¹⁰⁴ So both the value and wage forms, on which Marx’s critique of political economy turn, involve characteristic, and (within the context of Marx’s theory) readily explicable, category mistakes.

QUESTION 16. *Which category mistakes are implied in the value form and the wage form?*

Now once one accepts that phenomenal forms are necessary to the functioning of a capitalist economy (that is, once one rejects a crude materialistic inversion of the Hegelian notion of the autonomy of the ideal), one can

set out the following schema, adapted from an article by John Mepham.¹⁰⁵



Real relations, A , characteristically located by Marx in the sphere of production, generate phenomenal forms, B , characteristic of the spheres of circulation and exchange, which in turn are reflected in the categories of ideological discourse, C , which sustain and underpin such ordinary commercial practices as buying and selling, wage-negotiating, etc., at D . These are in turn, of course, necessary for the reproduction of the real relations A . The dotted line through BD denotes, as it were, the cut of everyday life. Marx's analysis typically moves retroductively from B to A , enabling a critique of C and informing practice at D . Moreover the analysis, in isolating the conditions for the phenomenal forms in a mode of production necessitating forms which are false (as in the case of the wage form) or systematically misleading (as in the case of the value form), *ipso facto*, without the intervention of any value judgements (other than those bound up in the assessment of the cognitive adequacy of the theory and *a fortiori* its superiority over bourgeois political economy), issues in a negative valuation of that mode of production. In discovering that the source of consciousness is such that it is false, Marx automatically discredits that source, while

simultaneously showing how that consciousness may yet be necessary. It follows from this also that, although a critique in Marx's sense is at once transcendently and subversively critical, Marxist science is subversive in virtue of its cognitive power alone.

Ideology at the same time fact and necessity:

Finally, it should be noted that Marx's analysis of political economy reveals not only a gap between how an object is and how it appears to be, but a 'contradiction', which I shall call a 'Colletti contradiction',¹⁰⁶ between the way it presents itself in experience and the way it really is. This is not just because analysis reveals a level of structure and set of relations not manifest to experience (or bourgeois ideology), which it does (see criterion (3') above), but which does not justify reference to a 'contradiction'. Nor is it only because the very forms in which social life presents itself to experience embody fundamental category mistakes (such as the presentation of the social as natural in fetishism or the 'interpellation' of individuals as free agents in their constitution as subjects).¹⁰⁷ Rather it is because, through the theorem of the necessity of phenomenal forms for

social life, they are themselves internally related to (that is, constitute necessary conditions for) the essential structures that generate them. On Marx's analysis, social reality is shot through with such Colletti contradictions. Paradoxically, however, far from confirming Colletti's diagnosis of 'two Marx's'¹⁰⁸ it is precisely the existence of just one—the scientist—that explains this. (For were criticism to be separable from analysis there would be no problem, and no contradictions of this type.) Moreover it is important to stress that such contradictions, which involve merely the necessary co-existence in social reality of an object and a categorially false presentation of it, can be *consistently described*, as indeed can the more straightforward logical kind present in the thought of every mathematics student. Colletti's transcendental idealism misleads him into viewing the principle of non-contradiction, conceived as a regulative ideal for thought, as a constitutive principle of thinkable reality. But of course where, as in social life, thought is itself part of social reality, there are bound to exist logical contradictions in reality. And if thought does not constitute (and so

completely exhaust) social reality, there are bound to exist misrepresentations of reality in reality. And among such misrepresentations will be some which are necessary for what they misrepresent. Now if such misrepresentations are themselves generated by what they misrepresent it will *seem* as if one has just moved in a circle, that one has a simple case of the identity of opposites here. But of course this is not so. For at each moment in the analysis concept and object remain distinct; and the relations involved are causal, not logical. Such a relation is still characterizable as one of ‘contradiction’, in virtue of the misrepresentation involved. But because one of the *relata* consists in a (misrepresented) real object, the contradiction is not internal to thought, as in the dialectics of both Plato and Hegel. And because the *relata* are necessary for each other, they do not stand in a purely contingent, external relationship to one another, as in a Newtonian conflict of forces or a Kantian *Realrepugnanz*.¹⁰⁹ So that if one chooses to use the term ‘dialectical’, in deference to custom but in opposition to history, to refer to *such* oppositions, it seems advisable to preface it, to indicate its specificity, by some such term as ‘Marxian’.

9. Notes

1. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, 1st edn (Leeds 1975), 2nd edn (Hassocks and New Jersey 1978), esp. ch. 1 sec. 4.
2. K. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth 1973), p. 265.
3. See, for example, A. Schutz, 'Common-Sense and Scientific Interpretations of Human Actions', *Collected Papers* 1 (The Hague 1967), or 'Problems of Interpretative Sociology', reprinted from *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (London 1967) in A. Ryan (ed.), *The Philosophy of Social Explanation* (Oxford 1973).
4. As is evinced by the possibility of absolute idealism as the ontological ground for idealist sociologies (often, and arguably necessarily, combined with individualism—for example Weber or Dilthey—or collectivism—for example Durkheim or, say, Lévi-Strauss—in the work of a single author). See also T. Benton, *Philosophical Foundations of the Three Sociologies* (London 1977), p. 85, n. 11.
5. See the specific analogy drawn by J. W. N. Watkins between methodological individualism in social science and mechanism in physics in 'Ideal

Types and Historical Explanation', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 3 (1952), reprinted in A. Ryan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 90, and 'Historical Explanation in the Social Sciences', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 8 (1957), reprinted as 'Methodological Individualism and Social Tendencies' in *Readings in the Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, M. Brodbeck (ed.) (London 1970), p. 270.

6. K. R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* 2 (London 1962), p. 98.

7. I. Jarvie, 'Reply to Taylor', *Universities and Left Review* (1959), p. 57.

8. J. W. N. Watkins, 'Methodological Individualism', p. 271.

9. *Loc. cit.*

10. J. W. N. Watkins, 'Ideal Types', p. 88.

11. See A. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History* (Cambridge 1965), ch. 12, and S. Lukes, 'Methodological Individualism Reconsidered', *British Journal of Sociology* 19 (1968), reprinted in A. Ryan (ed.), *op. cit.*

12. See J. W. N. Watkins, 'Ideal Types', p. 91 and 'Methodological Individualism', p. 273.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

14. D. Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature* (Oxford 1967), p. 415.

15. D. Hume, *Essays Moral and Political* 2 (London 1875), p. 68. Although this paradigm is perhaps for the first time clearly articulated by Hume, it is significant that in his thought, unlike many who followed him, it is counterbalanced by a stress on certain intrinsically social sensibilities, most notably sympathy, and an interest in history—both characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment generally (see, for example, G. Davie, *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh 1961)). Indeed for Hume it is precisely sympathy among the 'constant and universal principles of human nature' that provides the ground for our interest in history. See, for example, *Enquiries* (Oxford 1972), p. 223.

16. See S. Kotarbinski, 'Praxiology', *Essays in Honour of O. Lange* (Warsaw 1965).

17. See, for example, J. W. N. Watkins, 'Ideal Types', p. 82, n. 1.

18. J.-P. Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London 1976), bk. 2, ch. 1 and bk. 1, ch. 4.

19. There are of course non-, and even anti-individualist tendencies in Weber's thought—see, for example, R. Aron, *Philosophic critique de l'histoire* (Paris 1969). Similarly there are non- and (especially in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*) anti-positivist strains in Durkheim's thought—see, for example, S. Lukes, *Durkheim* (London 1973), and R. Horton, 'Lévy-Bruhl, Durkheim and the Scientific Revolution' in *Modes of Thought*, R. Finnegan and R. Horton (eds.) (London 1973). My concern here is only with the *dominant* aspects.

20. See, for example, R. Keat and J. Urry, *Social Theory as Science* (London 1975), ch. 5; and B. Ollman, *Alienation* (Cambridge 1971), esp. chs. 2 and 3. Of course there are positivist and individualist elements in Marx's work as well.

21. See especially P. Berger and S. Pullberg, 'Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness', *New Left Review* 35 (1966) and P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London 1967).

22. P. Berger and S. Pullberg, 'Reification', pp. 62–3.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
24. *Loc. Cit.*
25. E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York 1964), p. 2.
26. P. Berger and S. Pullberg, 'Reification', p. 60.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
29. E. Durkheim. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, pp. 1–2.
30. See C. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London 1966), ch. 1.
31. See A. Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method* (London 1976), p. 121; and J. Lyons, *Chomsky* (London 1970), p. 22.
32. See R. Harre and P. Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behaviour* (Oxford 1972), esp. ch. 5.
33. Mentalistic predicates may play a legitimate role in the explanation of social changes either as a result of their literal use to refer to processes of conscious choice, deliberation, etc., or as a result of their metaphorical

use to refer to the effects of teleonomic processes or homeostatic systems. See, for example, A. Giddens, 'Functionalism: apres la lutte', *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London 1977), esp. p. 116, or A. Ryan, *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences* (London 1970), pp. 182–94. But on the whole, persons make a bad model for societies (and vice versa).

34. Marx, perhaps, comes closest to articulating this conception of history:

History is nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other, modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity (K. Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology* (London 1965), p. 65).

The epistemic distance established in Model IV between society and people also indicates, at least schematically, a way in which substance can be given to the celebrated Marxian proposition that 'people make history,

but not under conditions of their choice'. The 'people' here must of course be understood not just as acting idiosyncratically, but as expressing the definite and *general* interests and needs of particular strata and classes, where these are defined in the first instance by their differential relationships (of possession, access, etc.) to the productive resources constituting structural conditions of action. These productive resources in turn must be conceptualized generically so as to include *in principle*, for example, political and cultural resources as well as purely economic ones.

35. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, p. 113. See also M. Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (London 1967), ch. 2.

36. E. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 3.

37. See M. Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York 1968), p. 4.

38. See G. H. von Wright, *Norm and Action* (London 1963), p. 10.

39. Of course populations are continuous and provide a biological basis for social existence. But their social attributes, whether analysed stochastically or not, must be explicated on either relational or collectivist lines.

And so they cannot provide the required social substrate without begging the question we are concerned with here.

40. Cf. Marx:

I paint the capitalist and landlord in no sense *couleur de rose*. But here individuals are dealt with only in so far as they are personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests. My standpoint, from which the evolution of human society is viewed as a process of natural history, can no less than any other make the individual responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains, however much he may subjectively raise himself above them (*Capital*, 1 (London 1970), p. 10).

41. See especially T. Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action* (New York 1959), pp. 89–94 and *passim*.

42. According to Marx human beings ‘begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence’ (*The German Ideology*, p. 31).

The first premiss of all human existence and therefore of all history [is] the premiss . . . that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'. But life involves before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself (*ibid.*, p. 39).

The 'first historical act' must of course be understood in an analytical, not chronological, sense. Cf. also: 'In all forms of society it is a determinate production and its relations which assigns every other production and its relations their rank and influence. It is a general illumination in which all other colours are plunged and which modifies their specific tonalities. It is a special ether which defines the specific gravity of everything found within it' (*Grundrisse*, p. 107).

43. The problem for Marxism has always been to find a way of avoiding both economic (or worse technological) reductionism and historical eclecticism, so that it does actually generate some substantive historiographic

propositions. It is a problem of which both Marx and Engels were aware. Thus as Engels was at pains to stress:

According to the materialist conception of history, the economy is the ultimately determining element in history. [But] if someone twists this into saying that it is the *only* determining [one], he thereby transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure ... also exercise their influence upon the course of events ... and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid the endless host of accidents, the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary (F. Engels, Letter to J. Bloch, 21 Sept. 1890, *Marx-Engels Selected Works* 2 (London 1968), p. 692).

But how is one to conceptualize this ultimate necessity? Marx provides a clue. Replying to an objection he concedes that 'the mode of production of material life dominates the development of social, political and intellectual life generally ... is very true for our time, in which material interests preponderate, but not for the Middle Ages, in which Catholicism, nor for

Athens or Rome, where politics, reigned supreme'. But Marx contends: 'this much [also] is clear. That the Middle Ages could not live on Catholicism, nor the Ancient World on politics [alone]. On the contrary, it is the economic conditions of the time that explain why here politics and there Catholicism played the chief part' (*Capital* 1, p. 81). Althusser has attempted to theorize this insight by saying that it is the economy that *determines* which relatively autonomous structure is the *dominant* one. See L. Althusser, *For Marx* (London 1969), especially chs. 2 and 6, and L. Althusser and E. Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London 1970).

44. See especially L. Colletti, 'Marxism and the Dialectic', *New Left Review* 93 (1975), and B. Ollman, *op. cit.*

45. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, esp. pp. 173–4. See also Marx's distinction between the 'method of presentation', which he characterizes 'as if a priori', and the (a posteriori) 'method of inquiry' in *Capital*, 1, p. 19.

46. *Ibid.*, esp. ch. 2, sec. 6.

47. See N. Elias, 'The Sciences: Towards a Theory', *Social Processes of Scientific Development*, R. Whitley (ed.) (London 1974).

48. A. Labriola, *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History* (Chicago 1904).

49. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, N. Kemp Smith (trans.) (London 1970), B74/A51.

50. But is the notion of a 'field' that exists only in virtue of its effects any stranger, or prima-facie more absurd, than the combination of the principles of wave and particle mechanics in elementary micro-physics, which is now reckoned a commonplace?

51. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, app. to ch. 2.

52. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, sec. 4.

53. There is no problem about the empirical testing of theories of phenomena which are internally related (although there is a problem, which can only be resolved intra-theoretically, about the appropriate specification or individuation of the different aspects or parts). For the locus of the empirical is the observable, and discrete observable items can always be

described in ways which are logically independent of one another. Hence even if social scientific theories can only be compared and tested *en bloc*, they can still be tested empirically. Thus because, say, ‘capital’ cannot be empirically identified and even if, as argued by Ollman (*op. cit.*), ‘capital’ cannot be univocally theoretically defined (or even conceptually stabilized), it does not follow that *theories* of capital cannot be empirically evaluated. The problem of the best individuation may then be resolved by considering which individuation is implied by (or necessary for) that theory which has the best causal grip on reality.

54. See, for example, N. Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971), esp. ch. 2.

55. See, for example, A. Cicourel, *Method and Measurement in Sociology* (New York 1964), esp. ch. 1.

56. See, for example, P. Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory* (New York 1962), pp. 180–90.

57. If correct, this has an analogue in the conscious technique of ‘Garfinkelling’ in social psychology—see, for example, H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (New Jersey 1967)—and perhaps also in the role played by psychopathology in the development of a general psychology. See also A. Collier, *R. D. Laing: The Philosophy and Politics of Psychotherapy* (Hassocks 1977), p. 132.

58. Consider, for example, the way in which the mass unemployment of the 1930s not only provided the theoretical dynamo for the Keynesian innovation, but facilitated its ready acceptance by the relevant scientific community.

59. See P. Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London 1976), for an extended discussion.

60. See, for example, G. Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (London 1976), ch. 5, sec. 3.

61. See H. Lefebvre, ‘What is the Historical Past?’, *New Left Review* 90 (1975), esp. pp. 33–4.

62. See I. Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, I. Lakatos and A. Musgrave (eds.) (Cambridge 1970).

63. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, p. 132. Cf. the notorious 'unfalsifiability' of economic theories. See, for example, E. Grunberg, 'The Meaning of Scope and External Boundaries of Economies', *The Structure of Economic Science*, S. Krupp (ed.) (New Jersey 1966).

64. L. Goldmann, *Marrxisms et sciences humaines* (Paris 1970), p. 250. See also Gadamer's strictures on statistics: 'such an excellent means of propaganda because they let facts speak and hence simulate an objectivity that in reality depends on the legitimacy of the questions asked' (*Truth and Method*, p. 268).

65. For example, the transformational mode) of social activity implies that it is a necessary condition for any adequate social theory that the theory be consistent with the reproduction (and/or transformation) of its object, and preferably that it should be able to specify the conditions under which such reproduction (and transformation) occurs. See, for example, M.

Hollis and E. Nell, *Rational Economic Man* (Cambridge 1975), esp. ch. 8 for a criticism of neo-classical economic theory along these lines.

66. See *Capital*, 1, ch. 1. Such a critique bears a formal analogy to Kant's *Dialectic*. See D. Sayer, 'Science as Critique: Marx vs Althusser', *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, J. Mepham and D. Ruben (eds.) (Hassocks 1979).

67. *Capital*, 1, pp. 90–1.

68. N. Geras, 'Essence and Appearance: Aspects of Fetishism in Marx's *Capital*', *New Left Review* 65 (1971), reprinted as 'Marx and the Critique of Political Economy', *Ideology in Social Science*, R. Blackburn (ed.) (London 1972), p. 297.

69. See *Capital*, 1, p. 537 and *Capital*, 3, p. 798 respectively.

70. K. Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', *Selected Works* (London 1968), p. 319.

71. See R. Edgley, 'Reason as Dialectic', *Radical Philosophy* 15 (Autumn 1976).

72. See, for example, S. B. Barnes, *Interests and the Growth of Knowledge* (London 1977), esp. ch. 1.

73. See, for example, J. Brennan, *The Open Texture of Moral Concepts* (London 1977), esp. pt. 2.

74. *Treatise*, esp. pp. 469–70. See R. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford 1963), p. 108.

75. See M. Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Chicago 1949), esp. pp. 72–6.

76. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, p. 212.

77. See, for example, J. Slack, ‘Class Struggle Among the Molecules’, *Counter Course*, T. Pateman (ed.) (Harmondsworth 1972).

78. See Engels to Lafargue, 11 Aug. 1884: ‘Marx rejected the “political, social and economic ideal” you attribute to him. A man of science has no ideals, he elaborates scientific results, and if he is also politically committed, he struggles for them to be put into practice. But if he has ideals, he cannot be a man of science, since he would then be biased from the start’; quoted in M. Godelier, ‘System, Structure and Contradiction in *Capital*’, *Socialist*

Register (1967), reprinted in R. Blackburn (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 354, n. 43. Of course what Engels omitted to mention was the possibility that Marx's scientific results might *imply* a political commitment.

79. For example G. Myrdal, *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory* (London 1953), or N. Chomsky, 'Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship', *American Power and the New Mandarins* (London 1969).

80. See, for example, G. Myrdal, *Value in Social Theory* (London 1959), p. 120.

81. See, interestingly, K. Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (London 1960), pp. 300–1.

82. See *A Realist Theory of Science*, p. 249.

83. See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford 1963), p. 223.

84. A. Giddens, in an important work. *New Rules of Sociological Method*, p. 16, p. 161 and *passim*, systematically confuses the fact that the

sociologist must utilize the cognitive resources of the agents under investigation in order to generate adequate descriptions of their conduct with the idea of their incorrigibility. He thus relapses into the pre-relativistic notion of incorrigible foundations of knowledge—despite an attempt to distinguish such incorrigible data from their representations as ‘commonsense’ (*ibid.*, p. 158). This is akin to trying to disentangle sense-data from their physical object implications. For such cognitive resources do not exist save in the form of beliefs such as ‘X is voting, praying, stealing, working, etc.’, embodying factual and theoretical presuppositions about the activities under question. It is thus not surprising that Giddens only sees the relationship between S_2 and S_1 as one of ‘slippage’ (*ibid.*, p. 162), potentially compromising, moreover, to S_2 . But the relationship $S_2 \rightarrow S_1$ is not just of slippage, but potentially one of critique; and such a critique is far from neutral in its implications. For though slaves who fully comprehend the circumstances of their own subordination do not thereby become free, such an understanding is a necessary condition for their rational self-emancipation. Conversely their master has an interest in their remaining ignorant of the

circumstances of their slavery. Knowledge is asymmetrically beneficial to the parties involved in relations of domination. Moreover, quite generally, explanatory knowledge increases the range of known possibilities and so *ceteris paribus* tilts the 'ideological balance-of-forces' against conservatism and the status quo (quite apart from its other effects). It is thus quite wrong to regard social science as *equally* 'a potential instrument of domination' as of 'the expansion of the rational autonomy of action' (*ibid.*, p. 159).

85. See, for example, R. Coward and J. Ellis, *Language and Materialism* (London 1977), p. 41.

86. According to Nagel, any threat to the value-neutrality of social science can be blocked by rigorously distinguishing between *appraising* value judgements which 'express *approval* or *disapproval* either of some moral (or social) ideal or of some action (or institution) because of commitment to such an ideal' and *characterizing* value judgements which 'express an *estimate* of the degree to which some commonly recognized (and more or less clearly defined) type of action, object or institution is embodied in a

given instance'—E. Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (London 1961), p. 492. Thus the judgement that a person is anaemic on the basis of a red blood cell count is a characterizing one; while the judgement that anaemia is undesirable is an appraising one (*loc. cit.*). There are several problems with this counter. Firstly, it is unclear why Nagel calls a characterizing judgement a value judgement at all. In effect the characterizing/appraising distinction just transposes the very fact/value one in question. Secondly, Nagel treats social reality as unproblematic and social science as approximating the deductive model. He thus fails to see that while the atomic resolution of theoretically defined concepts may be plausible in the case of some externally related natural phenomena, it is totally inapplicable to the reconstruction of social phenomena comprised of internally related elements. Institutions, such as the monarchy, and systems, for example of morality, either exist (and so must be grasped) *in toto* or they do not exist at all. Of course there are fuzzy boundaries and borderline cases, and descriptions require empirical testing. However, the occurrence of qualitative changes and the conceptual aspect of social reality limit the possibility of significant

quantification in social science. Moreover, to confuse the empirical checking out of our descriptions in L_2 and the properties of *that* process, with what such descriptions describe (in S_1), and the properties *they* possess, is to commit the verificationist fallacy.

87. C. Taylor, 'Neutrality in Political Science', *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 3rd Series, P. Laslett and W. Runciman (eds.) (Oxford 1967), reprinted in A. Ryan (ed.), *op. cit.*.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

89. See, for example, *ibid.*, pp. 145–6, p. 148 and *passim*.

90. See J. R. Searle, 'How to Derive "Ought" from "Is"', *Philosophical Review* 73 (1964) and *Speech Acts* (Cambridge 1969), ch. 8.

91. For example if one believed that it was morally wrong to commit oneself and others to action in the future.

92. See, for example, R. Swinburne, 'The Objectivity of Morality', *Philosophy* 51 (1976).

93. See R. Edgley, *Reason in Theory and Practice* (London 1969), esp. 4.11.

94. K. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 505.

95. See N. Geras, 'Althusser's Marxism: An Assessment', *New Left Review* 71, reprinted in *Western Marxism: A Critical Reader*, G. Stedman Jones *et al.* (London 1977).

96. See G. Stedman Jones, 'The Marxism of the Early Lukacs', *New Left Review* 70, reprinted in G. Stedman Jones *et al.*, *op. cit.*

97. See D. Lecourt, *Proletarian Science?* (London 1977).

98. The key to Hegelian philosophy, which enables it to achieve its philosophical coup, viz. the reconciliation of the Kantian antinomies, is precisely the realization by consciousness, in the form of the absolute spirit, that its object is in the end nothing other than itself. This involves precisely the denial of the *autonomous* existence of matter; that is, of its existence except as one moment in the development of Geist, the self-realization of the absolute idea. For Marx, in contrast, 'neither thought nor language ... form a realm of their own, they are only *manifestations* of actual life' (*The German Ideology*, C. Arthur (ed.) (London 1974), p. 118), so that

‘consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence’ (*ibid.*, p. 47).

99. This notion cannot be explicated here. But among its standard implications are the following ideas: (1) that the economic, and beneath that, the biological and ultimately the physical—see S. Timpanaro, *On Materialism* (London 1975)—set boundary conditions for the non-economic; (2) that the economic partly—and over—determines the non-economic; (3) that ideas must be explained at least in part by something other than ideas—something which need not be material but must be ‘materialized’ in order to exist as a social object; (4) that all social phenomena are intransitive (in the sense of p. 47); (5) that all social phenomena require a material substrate and/or possess a material referent.

100. See, for example, N. Stockman, ‘Habermas, Marcuse and the *Aufhebung* of Science and Technology’, *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 8 (1978), and T. Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology* (London 1976), on the material bases of science and literature respectively.

101. The currently fashionable rejection of the criterion of false consciousness by those who wish to define ideology solely by reference to its serving ‘concealed’ interests or its embodying ‘unnecessary’ domination presupposes that it might be possible to detect those interests or its role without a theory capable of explaining the phenomena that the ideological theory did. It thus presupposes that the conditions under which the *I*-theory holds are irrelevant to its explanation; and hence either that it is groundless or that one can study it in isolation from its grounds.

102. ‘The vulgar economists’ way of looking at things stems ... from the fact that it is only the direct form of manifestation of relations that is reflected in their brains and not their inner connections’ (letter from Marx to Engels, 27 June 1867, *Marx-Engels Selected Correspondence* (Moscow 1956)). ‘Vulgar economy actually does no more than interpret, systematize and defend in doctrinaire fashion the conceptions of agents of bourgeois production who are entrapped in bourgeois production relations’ (K. Marx, *Capital*, 3, p. 817). ‘In opposition to Spinoza, it believes that “ignorance is sufficient reason”’ (K. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 307).

103. M. Godelier, 'System, Structure and Contradiction in *Capital*', *Socialist Register* (1967), reprinted in R. Blackburn (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 337.

104. K. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 540. Dealing with the transformation of the value of labour power into that of labour in consciousness, Marx says 'this phenomenal form which makes the real relation invisible, and indeed shows the exact opposite of that relation, forms the basis for all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists' (*loc. cit.*). Moreover, whereas 'the value of labour appears directly and spontaneously as a current mode of thought, the [value of labour power] must first be discovered by science. Classical political economy nearly touches the true relations of things, without, however, consciously formulating it. This it cannot do so long as it sticks to its bourgeois skin' (*ibid.*, p. 542).

105. J. Mepham, 'The Theory of Ideology in *Capital*', *Radical Philosophy* 2 (1972), p. 18.

106. After L. Colletti, *op. cit.*

107. See, for example, L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Lenin and Philosophy* (London 1971), pp. 160ff. It should be noted that these category mistakes are corrigible in analysis, so that Marković's paradox, viz. that an account of social reality as reified (etc.) must itself embody reified elements (see M. Marković, "The Problem of Reification and the *Verstehen-Erklären* Controversy", *Acta Sociologica* 15 (1972)) does not vitiate Marxism.

108. L. Colletti, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 21–2.

109. See *ibid.*, p. 6.

Bibliography