

MARXIST THEORY OF CULTURE

The reckoning may be long postponed. An obsolete ideology can hamper
an economy and impede its change for longer than Marxists admit.
V.G. Childe. What happened in History.

There is the text of our discourse to-night. It is a text that raises
more and more disquieting suggestions the more one considers it. It cannot
be shrugged aside by a mere phrase about the drag of old ideas. In our per-
iod we have seen a continual interplay between ideas and political results,
economic forms and spiritual conflict, which cannot remotely be covered by
the all too simple relation of economics and politics which marxism was able
to tolerate during its earlier phases. The purpose of my paper then is to
examine the presuppositions of those phases of marxism and to inquire if
they were faulty or inadequate, and if so, how far they were out of line
with the full reality of social and personal life.

First then, let me take the familiar passages in which, very sketchily,
the founders of Marxism dealt with the issue -- the relation between the
bedrock factors of history and the full flowering of the spirit that we call
culture -- between substructure and super-structure, to use the classical
terms.

First, Marx in his preface to the Critique of Political Economy.

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite
relations which are indispensable and independent of their will; these re-
lations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their
material powers of production. The sum total of those relations of pro-
duction constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundations
on which rise legal and political superstructures, and to which correspond
definite forms of social consciousness.

The mode of production in material life determines the general char-
acter of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is
not the consciousness of men which determines their existence, but on the
contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.

At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of pro-
duction in society come in conflict with the existing relations of pro-
duction, or what is but a legal expression for the same thing -- with the
property-relations within which they had been at work before.

From forms of development of the forces of production these relations
turn into fetters. Then comes the period of social revolution. With the
change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more
or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations the dis-
tinction should always be between the material transformation of the econo-
mic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of
natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philoso-
phic -- in short, ideological forms -- in which men become conscious of
this conflict and fight it out."

That passage we shall have to re-examine later. Meanwhile, let us take the passages in which Engels modified the above position:

In Engels letter to Schmidt (27 October 1890), he says of the money market: "This new independent form must, of course, submit to the movement of production as a whole. But it also reacts by virtue of the strength of its immanent, i.e. its once borrowed, but gradually developed relative independence, upon the conditions and course of production..... having once arisen, it is endowed with its own movement," and he applies the same thing to purely political movements, and goes on: "The same is true of law. As soon as the new division of labour makes necessary the creation of professional jurist, another now independent division is opened, which, for all its dependence upon production and trade in general, still possesses a special capacity to react upon those fields. In a modern state, law must not only correspond to the general economic situation and be its expression; it must also be a coherently unified expression and free from glaring internal inconsistencies. To effect this, the fidelity with which law directly reflects economic conditions becomes less and less ... The foundations of the law of inheritance are, no doubt, economic. Yet it would be hard to prove that, e.g. the absolute freedom of testamentary disposition in England and the strongly restricted right in France, have only economic causes." Again. "It would be merely pedantic to seek economic causes for primitive superstitions.... So far as men of science constitute an independent group within the social division of labour, their production, including their errors, exercises a counter-acting influence upon the dominant economic influence.... If Barth imagines that we deny all counteraction by political and other reflexes of the economic movement upon that movement itself he is simply tilting at windmills. Let him read Marx's 18th Brumaire..... What all these fellows lack is dialectic....." In his letter to Block (21 September 1890) Engels says: "According to the materialist conception of history the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless abstract, and absurd phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. - forms of law, and even the reflexes of all these actual battles in the brains of the combatants; political, legal, philosophical theories, religious ideas and their further development into systems of dogmas also exercise their influence upon the course of the historic struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements, in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (i.e. of things and events whose inter-connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we can regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree..... One could not assert without pedantry that, out of all the petty principalities of North Germany, Brandenburg was determined by economic factors alone to become the leader..... it would be ridi-

culous to explain by economic causes the origin of German syntax..... Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that at times our principles have laid more weight on the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasize its central character in opposition to adversaries who denied it, and there was not always time, place, or occasion to do justice to the other factors of the historical process..... Many recent Marxists have certainly turned out an extraordinary kind of nonsense."

In his letter to Starkenburg (25 January 1840) Engels says: "It is not true that the economic situation is the sole active cause and, everything else only a passive effect..... though there is a fundamental economic necessity which in the last instance always asserts itself.... like a red thread running through all the others."

In his letter to Mehring (14 July, 1893) Engels says: "Marx and I are both to blame on one point. We both placed and had to place, the chief weight upon the derivation of the political, legal and other ideological notions, with their resulting actions, from economic facts. Consequently, we neglected the elements of their form (i.e. the actual manner in which they developed).... Because we denied that the different ideological spheres which play a part in history have an independent historical development, we were supposed to have denied that they had any historical efficacy. At the basis of this is the undialectical vulgar neglect of reciprocity. Once a historical factor has been brought into the world it can react even upon its own conditions."

I wish to point out first that these extremely important modifications or restatements are made all in letters, late letters dated 1890, 1893 and 1894. And he died in 1895. As far as I know Engels never stated these ideas or made any effort to work them out in his essays written for publication.

Why?

The simple answer is, I think, that Marx and Engels had the angle and direction of their work determined by the task they felt before them. They were concerned with the productive factors as the basic human element and their whole polemic was directed (a) against theories which lacked this primary materialist basis and (b) towards working out a sound political economy to meet the needs of the developing proletariat.

Except for the few hurried statements by Engels (and some portions of Marx to be cited later), they develop no theory of culture. With regard to culture they took on the whole a pragmatic attitude, pointing out that certain changes went on in the cultural levels at the same time as the changes in the economic sub-structure, and inferred that this parallelism was not accidental, but that both changes were governed by the same law, which they were content to trace out in the sub-structure.

To go further, a science of psychology was required, and that did not exist in their day. Only during the last fifty odd years, with Freud on the one hand and Gestalt on the other has the rudimentary basis of a gen-

uine science of psychology appeared.

Can we trace a significance in the date at which that psychological science appears? I think so. It is the period of developing imperialism, of large-scale cartels, and such large-scale organisation involves a lot of worldwide planning. The veiled relations of capitalistic production and exchange begin to disappear. The element of direct planning makes possible the unveiling of the real relation between what man does and what man thinks he does, between his practice and his ideology. There is then the primary basis for a theory of culture and for a real grasp of psychic process. In any event such a basis was not present in the days of Marx and Engels. It is with the final stages of imperialism, the present stages when we pass beyond even the forms analysed by Lenin, that the problem becomes acute and the solution is made possible. At the same time, as the result of the same complex of causes, the science of anthropology appears and makes it possible for us to understand the workings of the primitive mind - a vast area of knowledge quite closed to Marx and Engels.

First we must get our terms clear. What Marx claimed to be the basic factor was not the economic factor in the restricted sense. He said the basic factor was production.

What does that mean? What does production involve? It involves not only the economic mechanism but also the social relations which make that mechanism workable. And that is where Marx for the most part left the question. For political economy no more is needed. But a little thought will show that productive activity is always an activity of mind as well as tool, of consciousness as well as of social relations which are compulsive and blind.

Production must be purposive, or it achieves nothing. Man began to be man when the first dim relations of cause and effect dawned in his mind. Therefore the mental fact is basic. But so also is the tool, the economic mechanism. For the mental activity came about only as part of the outward-directed activity, the effort to control nature, to produce. Every advance of technique has been the result of a dialectical conflict and unity between mind and tool, man and nature, individual and group.

Since the mind is then a necessary factor in every human activity, it cannot be called a secondary factor. If two factors are absolutely necessary for a given result, we cannot abstract either as primary. We are confronted with a dialectical unity. Mind is basic. That means that mind cannot be abstracted into self-sufficiency. It cannot be isolated from the full productive act.

At the same time we must admit the truth of Marx's statement, cited above, about men entering into social relations outside their will. We cannot reduce human development to the rationalists thesis of a simple conflict between ignorance and knowledge. The unconscious elements (here I mean the social relations) were just as important in the full dialectical complex at any given point of history as were the purposive conscious elements.

But for the moment I wish merely to leave these two aspects.

I wish to go on to the definition of Superstructure - which I shall also call by the easier term of culture. I think that is better than Ideology etc. Under it we may gather all the activities which do aim at a directly productive end.

In the German Ideology production is called the Basis, and the resulting social relations as well as consciousness the Superstructure. Then one gets the series: economic relations determine social relations determine cultural relations.

But that is only to put distances between our terms which touching on any reality of relationship. The passage of Marx from the Critique puts together production and social relations and detaches from them the legal and political formations, with which it relates the forms of social consciousness, which we may call culture.

Unfortunately most of the discussions on this subject do not properly distinguish between spiritual activity and the resulting organised forms. Look at Engels' statement cited above. He deals with the money market, law and science, but the terms in which he speaks of science makes it clear that he is thinking of the results of science, the way in which scientific ideas or practices directly affect the economic level. He is not asking how science arises and what scientific activity is. He is thus thinking almost entirely of what I may call an institutional level.

But the problem we are seeking to tackle is not solved in any way by saying that the superstructure once it comes into existence reacts in certain ways on the economic levels. When we have said that we are still quite in the dark as to what is the real relationship involved.

I propose therefore to use the term Culture, since the term Superstructure tends to make one think of the institutional levels rather than of the process and nature of culture. We are above all concerned with an activity. The term Interaction is then seen as hopelessly inadequate. Does that substructure interact on the mind to beget a poem, and does the poem then interact on the substructure? Obviously to talk like that is to talk nonsense.

Perhaps it will now be becoming clear what are the first points I wish to clarify. There are numerous passages from Marx and Engels which state or imply that body and mind make up a dialectical unity - that without mental process there can be no productive activity. "It is obvious that we cannot think of denying to animals the capacity for planned, premeditated activity. On the contrary. Planned activity already exists in the germ wherever protoplasm, living albumen, exists and reacts, i.e., where definite movements, however simple, take place in response to definite stimuli from without. Such reaction occurs even where no cell exists, much less a nerve cell. Likewise the manner in which insectivorous plants sieze their prey seems in certain respects planned, although quite unconscious. Among animals the capacity for conscious planned action develops in relation to the development of the nervous system and

already attains a high stage among animals.

Nevertheless, all the planned action of all animals has not succeeded in impressing the stamp of their will upon the earth. For this man was required.

In short, the animal merely utilises external nature and effects changes in it simply by its presence; man in changing it makes it serve his ends, dominates it.

Yet, on account of the ^{lack} of a psych. science and the particular direction of the polemic of Marx and Engels, it seems to me that the angle of attack implies that the basic factors in productive activity are solely the economic mechanism and the social relations which are outside will. It follows then that, according to such a statement of the problem, the individual is a mere reflection of the economic mechanism and the sum total of social relations in which he is involved. There is no element of personality or anything that we can call freedom. The personality can be only a refraction of the mechanism and the relations.

In the same way culture will be a reflection of the economic mechanism and the sum total of social relations.

In thus drastically stating the problem I do not mean in the least that Marx and Engels made this reduction. On the contrary, as I try to show in other parts of this paper. But if one reads them without an historical sense, as bibliolaters - if one fails to make that ceaseless revaluation of terms and contexts, of relatives and aims, which makes up "creative Marxism" (On Stalin's sense) - then one inevitably ends by misunderstanding Marx and Engels. One betrays the whole gigantic effort of mind in their work and fights to impede the forward movement of their thought.

That effort to impede, by false reduction, is made (e.g.) by Plekhanov in a very shallow essay, The Materialist Conception of History. He at length declares he is refuting the mechanists who assert that history and culture are reflections of the economic factors. He declares that economic relations are themselves "a function of the social productive forces", whereas the idealist calls them "a function of human nature". He puts in place of the narrow economic factor the social productive factor, and says that the state of the productive forces in the long run determines all social relations, economic class-relations, then legal and moral relations, and lastly and indirectly the arts and sciences etc. What is known as the ideologies is nothing but a multiform reflection in the minds of men of this single and indivisible history, the history of their own social relations determined by the state of the productive forces.

What is this indirect determination? Does it merely mean that the connection is more tangled? If the cultural elements are a reflection of the substructure, it doesn't matter how tangled or prolonged the distance between, they are still mechanical, are still without any real life of their own. A reflection cannot be real.

I submit that P. has proved nothing and is still in the grips of a mechanist dilemma. He tries to escape it by his sleight of hand with the term productive. But that brings us back to the problem I have stated above.

If we eliminate spirit and consciousness from production, we find in the relation of Production and Culture one automatic blind process being reflected in other.

If we add spirit and consciousness to production, then production is more than a matter of economic mechanism and blind social relations, and Culture is not a reflection of productive activity, is not determined by it in a mechanist way.

Engels in his letters says that ultimately or in the long run production determines history. . . (With that, of course, no quarrel). The he rejects the economic factor as the sole determining factor. It follows he admits other determining factors. But he does not clearly specify what those other factors are or how they operate, nor to what degree they operate, nor whether they operate only in special instances. He simply insists that the ideological spheres do not have an independent existence. He insists on the need for a concept of dialectical reciprocity.

There is therefore nothing in Engels' letters which denies the thesis I am trying to put forward. It is true that what I advance goes further than anything he says; but he clearly above all is denouncing any mechanist analysis -- and I deny that one can escape the mechanist dilemma unless on some such lines as those I am submitting to you.

It is my proposition then that productive activity in its dialectical fulness always involves consciousness as well as unconsciousness, freedom as well as necessity, spirit as well as economic mechanism.

And that the same is true of culture. There we have a dialectical relation of consciousness and unconsciousness, freedom and necessity, spirit and mechanism.

How then can one reflect the other? In what sense can we possibly say that the spiritual activity and resulting form of a Beethoven symphony is a reflection of the mental activity and economic mechanism in a productive act? The term reflection will not do. It tells us nothing of any real relationship between the two levels. It is a mechanist term which we are impelled to use only if we are thinking mechanistically of the nature of production itself and therefore mechanistically of the nature of culture. If production is the result of economic mechanism and social relations alone, then it is mechanist and cultural activity is mechanist, and we use a mechanist term, reflection, to state the relation between the two.

If this seems hair-splitting, I insist that we are dealing with basic questions of theory here, and our primary terms are supremely important.

Let us look at the term Interaction which Engels used to describe the relation between the Superstructure and the Substructure. As noted, he was thinking institutionally, and so the idea is of one institution reacting on another, one form reacting on another form. Interact is the term we naturally use to express two elements impacting on one another at the same level, with resulting quantitative changes.

It seems to me to tell us nothing of what the real relationship between the productive and cultural levels is.

For instance, in the old pre-freudian books of psych. (e.g. Stout) the problem of the relation of mind and body is stated as a choice between Parallelism or Interaction. There is a mechanist or idealist notion of mind, and so mind can only be imagined as somehow miraculously carrying on in parallel with bodily process, or else as being an entity impacting on and interacting with the body and being interacted on in turn.

For a marxist the relation must be conceived differently. Body and mind make up an indivisible unity of life.

"In the last ten years it has been for the first time possible to observe physical phenomena in the brain which are at any rate associated processes which go on there. We find that various different sections of the human cerebral cortex, each of them composed of many millions of cells, are giving rhythmical electric discharges which involve the simultaneous electrical activity of many of these cells.

The most striking, generally described as the Berger rhythm, occurs in the occipital cortex and is concerned with vision. It is an easy one to locate. We find that the rhythm is disturbed if we tell the person observed to look at something. It is altered if he shuts his eyes. It is changed if he undertakes any process involving visual thinking.

Again, abnormal rhythms are found in epileptics and during sleep in normal people."

These are new facts, and naturally they are under very careful investigations at the present moment. Nevertheless, one is tempted to suggest the lines of thought to which they might possibly bear. The speculation would be that mind, considered as a thing (or the physical fact which determines the existence of mind) consists of the resonance energy of these simultaneous discharges of living cells. If so, the mind would be an aspect of the unity of the body...

Some such theory - compare those of the Gestalt psychologists - must evolve out of the present-day material and attitudes of science. Whatever

the details, marxist theory inevitably leads to the concept of the mind as the dialectical resultant of the organic unity - and - conflict of the body.

Since spirit or mind is a condition of the body's unity, is a quality of the unity of bodily organisation, it follows that mind and body are dialectically one. But that does not merely mean that mind is a quality of the body, it means that the human being, the human body, by its very nature, necessitates the existence of spirit, mind, consciousness. Since there is a dialectical relation, spirit is just as primary for the human being as body (conceived in physco-chemical terms). Since it is the unity of the body, it comes into existence with the body, and grows with the body. It isn't something added to the body, something that we can in logic substract from the body as a secondary function. In terms of evolution we can say that in organic matter precedes organic matter, but in terms of the human being we cannot say that body (i.e. physco-chemical process) precedes spirit.

This may seem simple, but I think that a little thought will make clear that we still inherit so many mechanist modes of thought that we continually in fact do think of the body as something primary and logically detachable from spirit as a separate entity.

For the individual then we find that the dialectical understanding presupposes a living conflict and unity of mind and body, in which both are essential. If you subtract body as primary, you get mechanism. If you abstract mind as primary, you get idealism.

Now let us look at culture. Consider first the primitive, since there the elements are so much simpler. The distance between production and culture is so much shorter. There is work and there is ritual.

Now the primitive is not aware of much of a gap, if any, between the two levels. Both aim at the same result. Security in a difficulty and hungry world. By work he tries to get food, by ritual he tries to ensure the right conditions for getting food. Food or children; Both work and ritual have the same aim of getting food or children.

But we cannot say that ritual is a reflection of work. It is work on a new level. That is, the relation is dialectical. And we can no more say that water is a reflection of two gases than we can say that ritual is a reflection of work. Labour-process has made a leap into a new level.

How does this happen?

Let me remind you of two laws of dialectics. The change from quantity to quality, and quality to quantity, and the law of transformation that results from the conflict and unity of opposites.

The central idea in Dialectical Materialism is that of transformation. The problem is at the same time: How do transformations occur and how can

we make transformations occur? The approach to this problem lies not in a philosophical analysis and definition of transformation, but in an examination of all observable facts in the universe as they are known to us from various sources, scientific or historical, but more particularly those political and economic transformations in which conscious action takes part." (Bernal)

(I do not cite this in support of my thesis of ceaseless transformations between the cultural and economic spheres, but merely for its emphasis on the central nature of transformations in dialectical process.)

Consciousness in the individual, we saw, emerges when the quantitative organisation of the body reaches a certain point of unity. Then mind, a new quality, develops, and keeps developing in a continual dialectical relation with the body.

Culture emerges in the group when the productive activity, with its co-operative basis, develops a certain quantity of superabundant social energy. The new unity, the new quality, which we know as culture appears.

In short, production and culture are in a dialectical relation of conflict and unity, and if that is so, then one is being continually transformed into the other.

Look at the primitive again. His superabundant social energy, based on productive co-operative activity, is transformed into the forms of ritual, that is dance and song and painting. This is no mere relection of labour process, but a transformation of productive activity.

It is productive activity on a new level, where it becomes a satisfaction in itself. And yet by the dialectical law the new activity, culture, is continually transformed back into economic activity. For the organisation of personal and social energy on the new level increases enormously human powers. The individual achieves enormously enhanced powers of energisation. Powers that he could never possibly have achieved if all his outlets of energy can be conceived as having remained on the economic level pure and simple.

These new energies return back into everyday life, giving increased consciousness for his daily task, his economic task.

He becomes thus a more efficient, a better organised productive agent; and from the higher level, the level of culture, spring ideas and impulses which are translated into techniques and new methods.

It is clear then that as soon as social energy reaches the dialectical point where it is transformed into the new quality, Culture, it has done something that cannot be undone. Something that is essential to all further social or personal development. Culture or the superstructure is

not something just added as a kind of extra, a luxury, to the substructure, the direct productive levels. It is something on which the substructure entirely depends, just as it depends in turn on the substructure. The two make up a dialectical unity. And man can no more get on with his productive task without an ideology, without a release and satisfaction on cultural levels, than he can develop airy structures of the mind without the sustaining productive levels.

For humanity, culture is just as essential as production.

Every advance in production is in a dialectical unity with an advance in culture.

Any formulation then which states production as isolatedly primary is mechanist and anti-dialectical. Man advances as the whole man, or not at all. He never advances merely as economic man, which is an abstraction without any historical meaning.

This analysis may be accepted for the primitive, for pre-class stages of society -- or for socialist society, for post-class society -- yet may be contested as unable to explain the motivation and movement of class-society.

I do not agree with that, though I admit that the problem gets much more complicated as soon as classes arise. (Incidentally let me say that I do not consider marxists have as yet even begun to treat adequately the dialectics of the origin of class-society. But I shall not go into that here.) I can only indicate the lines on which I think the problem must be grappled with.

I have been asked, to take a simple instance, how my thesis explains, say, the effect of the discovery of American gold by the Spaniards on the economic system of Europe can be explained. There, one may surely say, the influx of gold on to the market, brings about a qualitative change which expresses itself in new systems of credit etc, which in turn are transformed into mathematical problems and technical advances, etc., and are in turn transformed back into quantity, into the quantitative expansion of the economic mechanism.

But such playing-about with terms leaves untouched the basic issue raised earlier in this paper. What is the way in which the unrealised social relations act as a compulsion on the individual? If they act as an unconscious (unrealised) force -- reflected (to use the old mechanist term) on the tensions and conflicts of the ideological levels, where does the transformation-formula come in?

I confess that I can only see in this difficulty another form of mechanism. What are unconscious social forces? A marxist cannot be thinking in terms of Jungian collective-unconscious. If there is a dialectical relation of individual and society, the unrealised social relations

and their historical movement must have a dialectical expression in the individual in his personal unconscious and in religious (or idealist) formulations. Otherwise we are using the term "social relations" in a mystical vitalist sense. The conflict-and-unity between the elements of knowledge and consciousness in the individual and the elements of compulsion and unconsciousness must have a dialectical relation with the conflict-and-unity between the elements of planning and compulsion, of realised and unrealised cause-and-effect in society.

The significance of class-conflict in class-society is not thereby lessened. There the struggling to master the world and to know themselves is entangled in class-relations which are understood in a narrow sense but are not understood in relation to the movement of society as a whole. Therefore man's intuition of a co-operative whole is in conflict with his experience of a divided society. The productive pattern, transformed into the levels of culture, carries with it this tension, this conflict between co-operative content and class-forms.

The result is certainly a very complicated series of conflicts and transformations. There is no common body of culture because there is no common activity on the productive level. Differing class-positions will tend to bring about a different pattern of tensions and resolutions.

I am not attempting here to do more than to suggest what is the task before us, and to clear the ground by getting the basic terms worked out.

I shall indicate however some further points. Because marxism has so far tended to treat only of the economic mechanism and social relations, it has omitted the personal or genetic factor. It has never asked how social relations are translated into personal behaviour and cultural patterns. I will quote one horrible example by a prominent marxist which appeared a few days ago in the DW.

"When I am doing experiments on myself I always take my notes in the third person. And this is, of course, the usual practice in my profession.

Instead of writing "I am panting heavily and sweating slightly, but have no headache." I write "J.H. panting heavily (16 respirations in 30 sec) and sweating slightly. Reports no headache."

In fact, I try to think about myself exactly as I would about anyone else. Naturally I don't manage to keep up this attitude all the time, not being perfect in any way.

But surely such a standpoint is the correct one on which to approach moral, political and religious question, as well as scientific ones.

There is no room in the scientific attitude for such words as "I" and

"mine." In so far as a man can adopt it he inevitably finds himself loving his neighbour as himself-and occasionally hating himself as his neighbour."

One could hardly find a more mechanist statement. By some experiments in which quantitative aspects of the body are concerned the scientist reduces himself to an impersonal quantity automatically identifiable with any other (reduced) person. Personality is flattened out.

Before we understand what the problem is we must begin to understand the part played by the genetic factors in the individual. (Caudwell began to attack this issue, but confusedly). Jung has tried to isolate the infantile patterns of experience as mythical symbols, and the Gestalt school have tried out a method for defining the reality of mental process in figurations of movement. We must know and analyse these attempts for what is valid and invalid. We will then begin to see how the tension between self and society, between the organic functioning of body and the transformed patterns in the mind, enable us to grasp reality. Freud has given us the key to the dialectical movement between conscious and unconscious in the individual. We must sift his work, to get rid of the mechanist classifications, and must find how this process in the psyche which Freud has shown is dialectically linked with the conflicts between realised and unrealised social forces and relations.

We have got to remember that the individual is a member of a family as well as of a society, and that the unity-and-conflict within the family is never a reflection of the unity-and-conflict within society (though again there is a dialectical relation). However money-values may have permeated a family, there is normally something held there of original clan-relations. Something of the ideal: to everyone according to his needs and from everyone according to his capacities. In short, however discordant a family, it is something of a communist cell in a class-society. And so the link between the unity of family life and co-operative core of production, must be measured against all the dividing or class relations.

The genetic basis of individuality, and the unity-and-conflict of family and social relationships, must then be kept in mind in evaluating what goes to form a man. In a class-society the pattern is liable to become very complicated. The reduction to simple economic motivation becomes a mechanist absurdity.

The inadequate marxist formulations could persist as long as no advance towards a genuine psychological science was made. For then the claim that there was an ultimate relation between production and culture could be accepted in simple pragmatic terms. In our world that pragmatism has hardened for marxists into a dogma with all kinds of mechanist assumptions behind it, in which culture and spirit are given a part as having some sort

of reality and are then dismissed as being ultimately reflections of productive activity. If my analysis is correct, such dismissals are reactionary to a high degree. We are now returning to the point where Marx started from, the concept of the wholeness of Man. We must make the creative effort to regasp Marxism in its essentials.

A few words more on the early Marx and his thesis of the whole Man - something almost quite forgotten by Marxists. In the Holy Family and the recently printed Okonomische-Politische Marx emphasises man's Universal Essence and his Free Being. He insists that man's Universality appears "in practise precisely in that universality which makes all nature his inorganic body. Man knows how to produce in accordance with every genus, knows how to apply the criterion proper to each object; that is, man produces in accordance with the laws of beauty."

Man is thus conceived as essentially free and human in so far as he realises his Whole Nature in activity, in production. Emphasis is laid on the genetic basis of individuality. In the Holy Family Marx called for "a new activation of essential human power and a new enrichment of human power." and he italicises the term human both times. The goal, he says, is man's return to his "universal nature in a universal manner, that is, as a total human being."

All these ideas are expressed, I claim, in my thesis put forward tonight. Marx, in The German Ideology declares:

"The social structure and the State always arise from the life - process of definite individuals, not as that may appear in their own and other people's ideas, but as they really are, that is, as they act, produce in a material way, therefore as they produce under definite limitations, presuppositions and conditions which are material and independent of their will.

The production of ideas, concepts, of consciousness is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of actual life. Conception, thought, the mental intercourse of men, then still appear as the direct efflux of their material relations. The same is true of mental production, as expressed in the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion and metaphysics of a people. Men are the producers of their concepts, ideas, etc. - but real, producing men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and the intercourse, up to its most far-reaching forms, which correspond to these. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men in their actual life-process....

Men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, changes along with this their real existence, also their thinking and the products of their thought. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness."

Note he does not say in any way at all that the superstructure is a reflection of production. He relates both super-and sub-structure to a larger whole which he calls the life-process: which can only be what he called in The Holy Family "the Total Human Being."

He deliberately uses an active term to express the work of the spirit. Production. He thus makes the work of the spirit as real as any economic activity. He does not say that it is economic or social activity or relations which determines consciousness. He says it is Life. That is, he makes consciousness and economic activity both part of a larger whole, the life-process, the human whole.

His statement is thus quite antagonistic to what now masquerades the name of the marxist theory of the superstructure. Further it explains why he and Engels did not go further than they did in analysing the superstructure. The term production is here used to cover all human activity, economic, social or cultural. It is clear then that Production always had something of this larger sense for Marx, but he was not concerned to work out the dialectics of the relation between sub- and super-structure. After their early work, he turned for practical reasons to politico-economy. We can now proceed to the further task because of the great demolishing work done by Marx and Engels: work in which the dialectical analysis was applied widely to nature (the transformation of energy) and to the economic levels of society. Once the primary stages of consolidation are passed, however, the problem of Culture comes to the fore. It is found that men do not act on the oversimplification of motive which the concentration on economic-mechanism and social-relation implied. Men become men by a fuller process. And reasons imbedded in that fuller process can make them cling to an outworn scheme of things long after it has become political suicide and economic disaster. Because of the lack of any scientific psychology much of 18th century rationalism still clung to the first stages of marxism. Lenin knew that Rosa Luxemburg was wrong when she drew up her theory of spontaneity, which is logically impeccable if economic mechanism plus social relations is the whole dynamism of society. He knew just that things didn't work out that way, that the workers didn't become automatically revolutionary etc. But he had no theoretical justification.

In our own day we have seen how the cementing forces that can be brought together under the term nationalism can defeat and almost suppress the class-consciousness of the working class. And Stalin in his emphasis on creative marxism as against the doctrinaire bibliolaters so often trots-kytes, has shown that he trusts his perception of the living fullness of history before the logic of economic-mechanism plus social-relations. Soviet nationalism is not a temporary pandering to backward masses. It is the stalinist recognition that the old marxist formulation is inadequate.

We marxists who talk so much of the unity of theory and practice rely

on incorrect definitions at our peril. I believe that it is the flaw in dialectical reasoning which I have discussed which makes so much of marxist practice alternate between the doctrinaire and the opportunist. I believe that it must more and more incapacitate us in the tasks of our era, which are above all tasks of the cultural levels. We can never win over the masses while our psychology is ultimately one which reduces men to dummies and automata. It is bad if we do our best work only when we forget or defy what our accepted theory lays down as the basic motivation of men. We can then never heal the wound in culture. We can merely put a mechanist division into the heart of the creative faculties, and destroy the cultural worker who is sincere enough to seek to become a genuine marxist.

Marxism, in its narrow development, has been guilty like Freudism of the sin of anti-dialectic Reduction. It has sought to reduce humanity to economic basis and social relations, whereas Freudism sought to reduce humanity to the genetic basis of family relations.

The mechanist division in marxist thought is responsible for such diverse phenomena as the bad journalism of the DW and the considerable, sometimes very unfortunate, confusion of Soviet culture. Because of the mechanist idea that changes occur in the substructure which are reflected in the cultural levels, most marxist critics write of cultural phenomena as a series of separate events. Something happens below, and something abruptly happens above. These sheer gaps between cultural events are natural with the mechanist approach. But if the dialectical relation is seen, then it is clear that the cultural levels do not sink and rise like graphs of the economic tensions. Though there is an historical relation between the rise and fall of energy in the two spheres, yet the cultural level has its own laws of growth, its own inner dialectics; and it is thus that the force of Tradition is established. Engels pointed this out when he said. "Having once arisen, it (the superstructure) is endowed with its own movement." In a class-society, the veiled action of money veils in turn the relation between production and culture, and though the relation is not so hard to see in the long perspective of history, the individual can lose himself in the working out of formal relations within one of the spheres of culture, abstracting them almost altogether or admitting only a partial interaction with the economic levels or with society in general. Thus, the lawyer can imagine there is a philosophy of law, a law of nature, which has a logic all of its own apart from social development; he is thus making an abstraction of legal methodology. The poet can build up a creed of pure verse, etc.

The truth there is that no matter how much we insist on a real relation between production and culture, the medium of an art (the form in which the dialectical conflict is resolved by the poet) is not in any sense reducible to a social content. No more than the individual, because his

individuality is socially based, dissolves into a medium named society. He remains a living and distinct person. The poem is real in its own right, its own organic form, however essential the social content.

This organic nature of form we must stress. Some time ago (1939) I wrote in Dialectics (N.Y.)

"But still the gibe that the marxist has merely missed the aesthetic fact has its sting. For when one has minutely proved that Balzac understood the social relationships of his world, that he saw those relationships with an objective clarity which makes his definition intelligible and moving for readers who have stepped into a world where such relationships no longer exist, one has yet not shown in the slightest why Balzac is Balzac and how he differs from, say, Marx and Engels, who had, as analysts, the same remorselessly objective perception of social relationships.

In short one has still omitted the aesthetic fact.

The examination has not been irrelevant. On the contrary, the aesthetic fact does not exist in isolation, as the exponents of pure art would argue. It cannot be separated from its social origin and effects; in the last resort it merges with the human whole of its point in time, with the science, the labour-processes, the nexus of emotional and physical satisfactions, which make up the full human reality."

Now Tradition, which involves the forms of culture, is a social element. I have said that spirit is born as part of the body; is as material as the body but at the same time is a special quality of the body. But an individual who grew up among animals would lack all the human tradition, and spiritually he would remain on an infantile level. Technique and form are socially inherited and handed on: they are culture. In the sense then that the child gets on with the basic job of inheriting culture before it gets down to any work, culture is primary in the individual's experience -- basic elements such as language are in fact absorbed before productive activity is at all possible.

Without this cultural preliminary, the human tradition could not be handed on at all, and the substructure would never advance. It would in fact never have come into existence, and men would still at best be an animal horde. The forms of culture are therefore of extreme significance. They are learned in various ways and degrees before the individual begins to have any active relation to the economic mechanism or to be a social agent. It is true that the child is entangled in a social network, but the impact comes through education and family-relations - that is, through culture and through the family which as we saw before is never a miniature reflection of social relations.

On the contrary the family always has something that sets it in sharp opposition to class or money values. And for this reason, as well as because of the continuing conflict in society between co-operative content

That is, he uses terms which are consonant with the thesis of Transformation as stated in this paper, but totally opposed to any thesis of Reflection. (Marx is of course still much an Hegelian in his 1842 work, but the passages I quote are strongly in line with his whole basic outlook as stated up to the days of *The German Ideology*.)

I stress this because I want to make clear that Marxists have got to make a definite choice. They have got to stand by Marx with his thesis of the Whole Man and of Culture as "produced" (that is, part of the whole dialectical process which involves economic activity); or they have got to reject that Marx and stand by Plokhonov etc. on the thesis of Reflection, which was developed out of statements of Marx that are orientated away from the problem of Culture, polemically aimed against idealism from the angle of political economy, and that are therefore distorted when they are taken to oppose Marx's thesis of the Whole Man.

(2) "Our knowledge is a reflection of the objective dialectics of the World." Rudas, Dialectical Materialism and Communism.

That is a typical statement by a Marxist of to-day, and it is quite mechanist. Our thinking is itself a dialectical movement, and that is the sole reason why it is able to recognise dialectical movement in phenomena natural or social.

In no sense then can it be said that the processes of the world are reflected in our minds. They are dialectically apprehended by our minds, which is a totally different statement and which belongs to a dialectical psychology whereas the statement by Rudas belongs to a mechanist psychology.

(3) In the discussion only one person dissented and supported the term Reflection. He said that what happened was roughly this: Man invented a tool, (or rather, some blind interaction of man and nature begot a tool) he altered nature with it, and the alteration, or the tool, was reflected in his mind. He was changed and then went on to changing nature further.

Consider this statement. If the process is a two-way process, then the term Reflection must apply both ways. The tool, or the economic act, is Reflected in the mind, changing man; and then the changed man is reflected back in economic act or another tool.

Or the process is only one-way. The tool or the act is Reflected in the mind, but the changed mind is not reflected back in the world.

In short, the slightest consideration shows that the term Reflection leads to endless difficulties and cannot be upheld by any serious dialectical thinker.

The description which invokes the term Reflection, however it strives to complicate the matter, will always be reducible to the form given above.

It bears only a feeble schematic relation to the full human process which begins to become clear only when we see the material reality of spirit and call on the dialectical principle of transformation to explain the movements involved.

In the Critique preface, Marx does not give support to the Reflection - thesis. He is not there concerned at all in the way in which Culture arises: he merely points out that it is on the cultural levels that men are aware of their conflict.

(4) The idea of a dynamic tension continually resolved by dialectical transformations from one side to the other seemed an idea which nobody could grasp in the discussion. Yet it is absolutely implicit in the whole marxist idea of the relation of Body and Spirit, Man and Society, Society and Nature. Example after example might be adduced from Engels where quantities involve qualitative changes (transformations) without either side being actually changed into the other.

The inability to grasp this point shows the barren psychology of marxists in general, and their inability to advance beyond the point where Engels left Dialectics (i.e. attitudes mainly derived from physico-chemical process of energy-transformations) Engels eagerly applied Dialectics to the available fields of scientific inquiry. Since his day new fields have been opened, and Marxists strive to treat them as either non-existent or as needing no further development in methodology.

(5) An analysis of the changes in cultural theory in the Soviet Union would show the extraordinary backwardness of Marxism in this field in comparison with its maturity in the field of political economy.

The result has been a series of extraordinary errors and frustrations, through which as the one positive force has thrust the demand of the masses as soon as they began to gain time for leisure through the first 5 years plan.

The considerable successes in Soviet Culture (as distinct from applied science, where the direct economic relation changed the situation) have come all out of a pragmatic questing for satisfying values, with resulting vast wastage and confusion. Such confused pragmatic attitude, with an undialectical effort to connect up culture and politics in a direct way, is quite contrary to the real spirit of Marxism. And would certainly have been repudiated by Marx and Engels.

PROPOSITIONS

1. In Dialectical unity there is a conflict leading to Transformation. There may be (a) a complete absorption of the two elements in the new qualitative substance, gases and water. (b) a partial absorption as when feudalism is transformed into capitalism but still carries on many of its relations. (c) a continual conflict-and-unity with ceaseless to-and-fro of Transformations. e.g. mind and body, man and society, society and nature.

2. In dialectical unity both sides are equally necessary and therefore neither is prior. e.g. body and mind in the human being.
3. The economic processes and culture make up a dialectical unity, and therefore a series of to-and-fro transformations.
4. Human individuality has a genetic basis, which is only developed in a dialectical relation with society.
5. As a complete philosophical method and system, Marxism has in many ways ceased to develop since Engels. Failure to develop always means certain recessions, and there has therefore hardened a mechanistic use of the concepts of economic activity and social relationship.
6. In particular Marxists have failed to keep up with scientific analysis and to grasp the dialectics of the Family, the area where the genetic factor and the social most strongly and clearly mingle.
7. To remedy this backwardness, we need a marxist development of Gestalt and Freudian theory on converging lines: to grasp the relation between the conscious and unconscious tensions or patterns in the individual and the free and compulsive elements in society.
8. Marxism, as part of the backwardness indicated, has failed to produce an adequate theory of culture. Yet such a theory is now urgently required by the nature of world-developments.

Jack Lindsay