

A Contribution to the Reconstruction of the Marxist Perspective:
Ideas on the Reappropriation of Marx's Dialectical Method

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is primarily concerned with and motivated by the broad and overarching question of how can contemporary coming of age intellectuals learn and employ a Marxist perspective to understanding and changing the troubled world that they inherit? The actual and primary research question for this thesis is how have previous generations of intellectuals appropriated (in the case of Marx) or reappropriated (in the case of Gramsci) the Marxist method?

It is possible to frame the structure of this thesis historically in terms of Karl Marx's creation of the Marxist perspective and then Antonio Gramsci and Michael Burawoy's reconstruction of the Marxist perspective. The historical chapter on Marx, who begins the intellectual lineage, is followed by a historical chapter on Gramsci, an early example of the reappropriation of the Marx's method, and then a more contemporary chapter on Burawoy's reconstruction of Marxism.

The Marx chapter reviews the challenges to arriving at an understanding of Marx's method and then suggests an approach for overcoming those challenges. In this, it relies heavily upon the work of Bertell Ollman, whose work also serves as the basis for a systemic investigation of Marx's method. The historical investigation of Marx's method reviews Marx's biography and engagement with the intellectual currents of his day.

The Gramsci chapter is organized around two themes: Gramsci's envisioned but unrealized plan for the reconstruction of Marxism and Gramsci's actual reconstruction of Marxism. In particular, this chapter focuses on Gramsci's appreciation of the need for confronting the Marxist revisionism of his day with a systematic reappropriation of Marx's dialectical method. Accomplished through rigorous study and polemical battles, Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method

served as the foundation for his political theory. The chapter concludes with the assertion that Gramsci's political theory can only be understood in the context of his dialectical method.

The Marx and Gramsci chapters clarify both what's involved in Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method and the method itself. With respect to the philosophical underpinnings of the method, the thesis has underscored the method's ontology and epistemology. The ontology is characterized by materialism and what Ollman calls the philosophy of internal relations; its epistemology is characterized by a dialectical realism and a focus on abstraction. With respect to its broad research guidelines, Marx's method suggested an investigation that began with system before history through what Ollman calls Marx's "dance of the dialectic." For both Marx and Gramsci, critique was an integral part of the method as a whole as well as a technique that they employed in clarifying for themselves and others the inconsistencies of rival theoreticians and the possibilities of their historical situations. For both Marx and Gramsci, the totality of their method including its internal and external relations developed through a critical and revolutionary engagement with unfolding epochal and conjectural processes and contending understandings of these processes.

The Burawoy chapter focuses on a contemporary reconstruction of the Marxist perspective. What emerges in the Burawoy chapter is a serious polemic in the tradition discussed above. As such the Burawoy chapter provides the vehicle for: 1.) integrating and synthesizing the lessons of the thesis; and 2.) bringing these lessons to bear on a critique of Burawoy that thus models a polemic as a means of intellectual reconstruction and presentation, reappropriation and rejuvenation.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Philip Michael Wider was born in 1968 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Drs. Joan and Saul Wider. He graduated from Springfield High School in Pennsylvania in 1986. He received his B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania in 1990.

Upon graduating from college he co-founded the student organization Empty the Shelters and began working with grassroots anti-poverty efforts led by poor people including the National Union of the Homeless, the National Welfare Rights Union, the National Up and Out of Poverty Coalition, and the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. Since then he has worked with member organizations of the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and the University of the Poor.

Most recently, he has been a co-founder of the Media Mobilizing Project in Philadelphia and also works with the Poverty Scholars Program of the Poverty Initiative at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

To my parents, whose thirst for knowledge and justice inspires me.

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PREFACE

This preface basically tracks the evolution of my thesis from its initial focus, through a couple of intermediary iterations, to its final form. With both this thesis and its preface I have two audiences in mind - the campus and the community. Rather than seeing the former as the academy and the latter as the movement, I prefer to regard both as arenas of struggle through which and in which the social movements of today are being born. For academic readers my hope is to with this preface give them a sense of why I've chosen this topic, a somewhat unusual selection for a Master's Thesis in the sociology discipline. For non-academic readers my hope is to make more interesting and accessible why my investigation into this perhaps seemingly arcane area of inquiry.

When in my second year of graduate school it came time for choosing a topic for my Master's Thesis I knew I didn't want to do field work. I had done tons of "fieldwork." I didn't want to, as was commonly done, go out into the field and study a question, place or a group of people. Rather I wanted to stay in the library and continue my studies of "accumulated wisdom." In my courses I had come across a group of academics whose work intrigued me. Amongst the numerous themes that seemed to unite them was their common focus on the issue of globalization and transnational class formation. This was also an issue with which those I had been working prior to graduate school were interested. Thus I set out to write a thesis about how these intellectuals understood the question of transnational class formation.

However, well into this process, one that had taken me off campus and back to my home in Philadelphia, I realized that what interested me most about these academic intellectuals was less how they understood the formation and reality of transnational classes and more their approach to and efforts to develop an approach for

understanding the world, an approach which included class analysis as a key ingredient. At this point I was reminded of the fact that developing for myself just such an approach to understanding and changing the world had been an underlying goal since deciding I wanted to attend graduate school.

While working on this thesis, my activities during my time away from the campus have further confirmed this goal. In this time I've studied a series of ruling class intellectuals (Zbigniew Brzezinski, Josephy Nye, Robert Keohane, Thomas Barnett, John Arquilla and David Rondfeldt, etc.) some of whose work is referenced by a couple of the intellectuals (e.g. Cox and Gill) this thesis touches upon. Their work reveals how organic intellectuals of the ruling class appreciate the necessity of developing a viable analytical and political perspective. Ruling class intellectuals of the Tri-Lateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the World Economic Forum and other planning groups have worked together on developing frameworks that allow them to more fully understand a world in transition and also to organize according to the interests of those forces they represent, serve and coordinate. I've read Gramsci, interpretations of Gramsci, and critiques of those who employ Gramsci's approach in their own work, as well as studied Marx's intellectual and political trajectory, or how he came to what we now know as Marxism.

I've also led numerous Philadelphia based study groups on globalization and social change, on Hobsbawm's *Age of Revolution*, on the Rand Corporation's concept of Netwar, and on cities in the age of global capitalism. Additionally I've helped to organize and develop curricula for two national leadership schools of the University of the Poor as well as worked with the Poverty Scholars Program of the Poverty Initiative at Union Theological Seminary. These efforts have been oriented to meet the educational needs of leaders emerging in different arenas of a still very incipient movement to end poverty in this country. In the last couple years, I've also begun to

work with an extraordinary group of people on a project called the Media Mobilizing Project (MMP). MMP does collaborative media making that documents lives, experiences and issues that are purposely submerged from view. In this way it clarifies issues at stake, documents lived human realities, and inspires and unites those with a vested interest in change. Through media making, education and organizing MMP works towards the building of networks necessary to address the root causes of the problems facing society.

In these academic and organizational arenas, and domestically as well as abroad (having made a trip to China and Japan in 2005), one thing has become clear to me. Not only do I want to develop for myself an intellectual perspective, but the emerging social movement needs a perspective of its own with which to process the events of the day and chart a course towards achieving its goals.

On this point, at a University of the Poor meeting, which took place in New York City on the weekend following the November 2004 presidential elections, Wanusa dos Santos of Brazil's Movimento Sem Terra (MST), the largest social movement in the hemisphere, told of how for the MST the development of a collective and organizational approach to understanding the world has been key. She called this approach dialectical and historical materialism or Marxism.

Over the time span during which this thesis has been germinating there have been several moments where events took place in this country that disrupted the routine of everyday life. Here September 11, 2001, and August 29, 2005, (Hurricane Katrina hits land) come to mind. For leftists and even liberals November 9, 2004, (G.W. Bush's reelection) can be added to the list. Arguably, in these events it wasn't the world that changed, but people's openness to and desire for understanding that world that changed. In a certain sense then the world did change.

In their response to these events I observed that people didn't know how to connect everything they were experiencing and observing into a coherent understanding. For the most part these were engaged people active in and well informed about the issues of the day. Yet, they had no method for sorting through the data and figuring out which facts were primary and which secondary. In the absence of an approach with which to put in place the significant facts at hand they ended up being quite eclectic.

Thus again and again it has become clearer and clearer to me that it's essential that the movement today have a perspective that works for understanding what's happening and what needs to be done. A perspective that enables people to sort through what they see around them and chart a course forward. A perspective that helps people to make analyses and develop strategy based on those analyses. An intellectual and political perspective adequate to the intellectual and political tasks at hand today. A perspective able to assist people in the critique of contending theorizations of contemporary global capitalism so as to be able to critique capitalism itself. Such a perspective would enable people to not just operate on the basis of already determined conclusions – analyses and proposed courses of political intervention handed to them by intellectual or political elites (often of a social democratic persuasion) – but enable people to understand and employ for themselves a common and evolving method of developing such analyses and plans of action.

I believe that the inability to grab a hold of the Marxist perspective limits today's still nascent movement's ability to get an accurate picture of the reality it's dealing with - its opportunities and possibilities, its obstacles and dangers – thus limiting its ability to craft a viable course forward. In my opinion, those most clear and insightful both historically and today have often proceeded from a Marxist approach in analyzing the situations they've faced. I have felt that my own clarity has

come from my developing understanding of such a vantage point as well. Marxism was the approach of those who had brought me into politics. It was the approach of previous revolutionary movements. It was the approach that seemed to offer the clearest picture of what was going on in the world and what could be done about it. It was bold and uncompromising.

Yet in our society there are numerous relationships to the Marxist perspective. These include - 1.) hostility towards it; 2.) indifference towards it; 3.) openness towards it; 4.) superficial agreement with it where it doesn't really influence the way one thinks about and acts upon the world; 5.) acceptance of it so that its conclusions guide one's activity; and finally 6.) mastery of it so that one can come up with conclusions of one's own.

Here it might be useful to focus on the latter two of these relationships to Marxism. On the one hand there are those who accept the perspective so that they proceed from its conclusions and the implications of these conclusions. These are folks who have an appreciation for the conclusions of others' investigations – such as those of a David Harvey, Stephen Gill or William Robinson. They may even apply the conceptual framework that these folks suggest to their own area or arenas of inquiry and activity. On the other hand are folks who develop mastery of the Marxist method so that they are able to develop their own conclusions and implications from these conclusions. They contribute to the perspective by mastering and employing its scientific method. They are able to develop a conceptual framework that works for the particular problems they are trying to answer.

As this thesis will argue, this passage from acceptance to mastery involves and necessitates attention to and focus upon reappropriating Marxism's method. Coming to really acquire a perspective means going beyond knowing its conclusions to knowing the method by which its conclusions are reached. It means going from an

understanding of its doctrine to an understanding of its science or method. In this sense the reappropriation of the Marxism's method will need to precede the rejuvenation of the entire Marxist perspective.

In order for intellectuals to come to and employ an understanding of Marxism, tremendous self-study and collective study and debate are required. It requires the study and mastery of the classics, subsequent works and lineage, and contemporary developments. Indeed, the understanding of the Marxist tradition advocated for in this thesis entails an acknowledgement of the brilliance of the tradition's profound respect for learning the lessons of past experiences and contributions (not just practical, but also methodological and theoretical) that revolutionaries have paid for, often with their lives.

The project or undertaking of learning Marxism is a Herculean endeavor that requires a huge dedication of time and resources. Lynne Lawner observes that "Marxist critical thought, or what Gramsci terms 'the philosophy of praxis' – is not a level of consciousness that can be immediately acquired." (Lawner 1973, 45) Robert Cox acknowledges "it takes a long time to become a Marxist." (Cox and Schechter 2002, 28) The movement Marxists I encountered before graduate school made it clear, with great humility, that they were students of Marx rather than fully developed Marxists.

Yet for many taking on this huge endeavor is preempted by the fact that, whether campus or community based, they lack the necessary interest in Marxism that would be required to really dedicate oneself to its study, employment, and mastery. This seems to stem from their lack of appreciation for the utility and benefits of Marxism. This lack of interest in and appreciation for Marxism makes their learning Marxism in any serious way rather unlikely.

Where has this lack of appreciation for and interest in Marxism come from? Arguably there are many factors that have precipitated such a situation. The following blocks are only really clear to me now as I write this. Taken together they prevent people from being able to develop such a perspective. First, there is the society and movement's anti-intellectualism and pragmatism, even among academics. Second, there is the anti-authoritarian, individualistic, anarchism that is rampant throughout society, the movement and the campus. Third there is the anti-communist legacy of the McCarthy period.¹ Fourth, and connected to the third point, there is the flawed representations of Marxism by bourgeois theoreticians and ideologues and even "progressive" intellectuals hostile to the perspective, their hatchet jobs of these misrepresentations of Marxism, and the rival perspectives that these intellectuals produce and disseminate. Fifth, there are the failures and excesses of the experiments with "actually existing" "state" socialism. Sixth, and finally, there are the flaws of the prevailing Marxist perspective and how it is taught in both the academic Left and the broader Left, both on and off campus.

Before entering graduate school I had been told plenty of times that you couldn't learn Marxism on the campus. I had also found it difficult to learn it in the movement. More specifically, as far as blocks in the movement were concerned, the older comrades underestimated the intense, intellectually rigorous process many of them went through in developing their Marxism. They were clear on the different components of Marxism, but they did not sufficiently present the history of past debates on these components and they were not sufficiently engaged with current

¹ One of the main accomplishments of the Cold War was to disconnect the left leaning intelligentsia from the communist inspired and inclined working class movement. The US government and US based foundations spent billions on such an effort both within the US and abroad. There were both economic and socio-political aspects to this. In the US and the developing world more coercive means were employed than in Western Europe where Marshall plan funds were targeted. But even in Western Europe a huge amount of resources were poured into the cultural arena. (Saunders 1999)

debates on these components. Additionally, in their over reliance on certain texts they presented Marxism as if it were an uncontested terrain. They didn't present the historical and contemporary differences of opinion within the approach, the different theorizations or specific theories. This limited their ability to understand Marxism and to teach it.

In many ways my academic experience was rooted in the struggle to overcome the sectarianism of the particular current in the left in which I had been a part. It was insular and sectarian and so there were blind spots where it could not take advantage of the work of other Marxists and Marxist schools of thought. In their study of Marx, Russian/Soviet Marxism, and the Marxism of the Third International, they had collectively closed themselves off, with a few individual exceptions, to an engagement with the rest of the left and in particular the academic left. For me the process of coming out of this sectarianism in which I was intellectually and politically introduced to Marxism and the left was a painful process.

As far as blocks in academia were concerned, my graduate classes didn't place any of the theorists we were studying in enough of the historical context in which they were writing. What was going on in the world around these theorists and in particular in the political currents of which they were a part of and/or to which they were responding? These classes lacked a focus on the historicity of these theorists. Additionally, when it came specifically to Marxism, the academy failed to look at its different elements. There was really just a very limited brush with Marxism, looking at excerpts and tid bits and not a systematic study of its foundational works.²

² While in contrast to my movement experience some of my classes did present several of Marxism's internal and external debates, at the time I didn't know what to do with these debates in part because I had been taught a version of Marxism absent such debates. It was also the case that some of these were academic debates to which to this day I can find no practical significance.

Arguably, many Marxists in the academy have had to leave out certain elements of Marxism in order to be acceptable to that academy. It is at least in part their having left out these elements that has weakened the appeal of their work, and thus of Marxism, to young academics and social movements of today. Additionally, some non-Marxists sympathetic to Marxism have appropriated bits and pieces from Marxism into their own work. This too may have unintentionally contributed to the lack of interest in a serious return to and study of Marxism.

This thesis is a response to the ahistorical, decontextualized and homogeneous interpretation or presentation of Marxism that I experienced both in academic and movement settings. As I see it, Marxism's being presented in an ahistorical way led to it being seen as a historical artifact to be ridiculed and kept at arms length. This contributed to the dearth of serious attention paid it. It's being presented as a monolithic tradition led to its being seen as an emasculated, in a vacuum perspective, contrasted to an embattled, engaged, contested terrain.

The blocks here discussed often obscure the resources available to us in the current situation. In studying the intellectuals I had chosen to focus on in my thesis I discovered that in developing their approach they had all rather explicitly drawn upon the work of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. Leslie Sklair did not and was on this basis excluded from my investigation. As I proceeded I came to an increased appreciation of the fact that not only these Neo-Gramscians, but also Gramsci himself, were operating in the context of a lineage. To adequately understand how they had each developed their approach, and in turn inform how I might develop for myself such an approach, I would have to place them in the context of such a lineage, and the particularities of their day, and engage in a thorough study of their relationship to both that lineage and their own historical context. Thus the thesis topic had once again

switched, this time from a study of the Neo-Gramscians's method to a study of their own and others' efforts at reconstructing the Marxist perspective.

In the process I decided to look at both how Marx came to what we know as Marxism as well as what his Marxism was. This ended up being quite an undertaking, one aided by two excellent studies of Marx's method found in the work of Bertell Ollman and David Walker. It was equally labor intensive to really grapple with Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method and his steps towards the reconstruction of Marxism as a whole.

Having covered this vast terrain I was about to engage in a study of the Neo-Gramscians who inspired this thesis, and in particular Stephen Gill whose work was most reflexive with respect to the project of reconstructing Marxism, when I opened up what proved to be the stimulating terrain of Michael Burawoy's effort at reconstructing Marxism.

In some ways this thesis was meant to be a polemic with Burawoy. It almost feels like through the process of writing this thesis I stumbled upon this necessity. By way of reference to the Russian Marxist Plekhanov and even Gramsci, who both spoke of how an appreciation of necessity was the foundation for freedom, the same can be said for this thesis and its polemic with Burawoy.

It was in one of my first graduate sociology classes that I came across Burawoy's article, "Marxism As Science: Historical Challenges And Theoretical Growth" written in 1990. At the time it captivated me with its command of a lineage I had heard bits and pieces of but of which I did not have a clear formulation and working knowledge. Well into working on this thesis I discovered a later article of Burawoy's on this same theme, "For a Sociological Marxism: The Complementary Convergence of Antonio Gramsci and Karl Polanyi" written in 2003, which in many ways, though departing from some of the formulations of the first article, continued

where the other left off. Arguably for Burawoy, it accomplished the reconstruction of Marxism that the first article talked of needing. Yet as the last chapter of this thesis will show, I found that Burawoy's reconstruction of Marxism was highly problematic.

In many ways his treatment of Marx was the advanced counterpart, one offered to the "priests," to the superficial treatments of Marx found in most Sociology 101 textbooks that were offered to the "subjects." In part, his presentation of Marx was effective or successful because it was produced by not just a scholar sympathetic to Marxism, but by an actual "adherent" of Marxism. Additionally, it was likely to be used by both sympathetic and actual Marxists.

In this context it occurred to me to ask several questions. How many sympathetic, yet largely unversed in the Marxist tradition, sociology professors use Burawoy's work, either his 1990 or 2003 articles, to offer their graduate students, the future faculty of the discipline, a take on Marx and Marxism? To what extent does what Burawoy offers, given his stature as a senior faculty at one of the nation's most prestigious sociology departments and as past president of the American Sociological Association, become the definitive interpretation of Marx and Marxism within the discipline of sociology? What are the intellectual and political implications of all of this?

The bottom line is that the extensive terrain of Marx and Gramsci and, what for me was, the intoxicating terrain of Burawoy bumped a study of the Neo-Gramscians, with whom this thesis started, into a future research project. More will be said on this in the thesis conclusion.

Through the course of working on this thesis I've come to realize that Marxism can be most fully understood if in its study attention is paid to its historical development. This includes paying attention to the development of its method/approach as well as its analyses of various periods and of particular situations

and its evolving strategies and tactics. To understand Marxism as a living tradition and process, it must be studied as it evolves and develops, not as a static method. This is especially true if, as is key for me, the point is for people to be able to employ it.

The situation we face today, of fighting against the blocks described above and for a familiarity, facility and mastery of the Marxist approach, is similar to the struggles of past Marxists, including Marx himself. Of great resource in our efforts to develop for ourselves a working grasp of the Marxist perspective will be a familiarity with how previous intellectuals have grappled with similar questions and blocks. How have they come to develop their own understanding of the Marxist perspective? This is the central focus of the thesis. In this context it is clear that a study of Marx, Gramsci and Burawoy is more than just a critical review. It is an intense learning experience and synthetic process.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“In the social sciences reflection on established paradigms is a normal, and perfectly proper, way in which problems are clarified and disciplines advance, particularly in times of theoretical crisis... Every generation reappropriates its intellectual heritage in accord with its needs and priorities.” (Sayer 1987, vii)

“Every epoch fashions its own Marxism, elaborating that tradition to tackle the problems of the day... Each Marxist offspring has its own originality and autonomy, irreducible to its parents.” (Burawoy 2003, 194)

Questions

This thesis is primarily concerned with and motivated by the question of how can contemporary coming of age intellectuals learn and employ a Marxist perspective to understanding and changing the troubled world that they inherit? In this thesis introduction I will address four questions. These include: 1.) What do I mean by the term perspective? 2.) How do intellectuals come to their own understanding of the perspective that they will employ? 3.) How have previous generations of intellectuals come to rejuvenate Marxism (in-other-words how have they come to understand, employ, master, contribute to and fight for the influence of the Marxist perspective)? 4.) How have previous generations of intellectuals appropriated or reappropriated the Marxist scientific method? The final question will actually be the primary research question of this thesis. As such this thesis introduction ends with a discussion of how the thesis will address this question.

On Perspectives

Before going further it will be useful to discuss both my working definition of the term perspective and my understanding of the way intellectuals come to own, employ and fight for the influence of a perspective. This initial discussion is based primarily upon the work of Stephen Gill, Robert Cox and Derek Sayer.

According to Gill, perspectives contain “basic concepts and assumptions which underpin theoretical explanation.” (Gill and Law 1988, 17) They do this by shaping and limiting the types of questions asked and the types of answers given. (Gill and Law 1988, 17) Additionally perspectives contain “a range of specific theories” and facilitate the “creation of more such theories.” (Gill and Law 1988, 18)

Gill delves further into the basic assumptions of a perspective by suggesting that perspectives are underpinned by rival philosophies of science that “differ over the relative importance they attach to ontology and epistemology.” Gill defines ontology to mean “the nature of reality and its underlying units, which form the starting point of theoretical explanation.” He defines epistemology as the “theoretical view of the nature, and conditions for, the growth of knowledge.” (Gill and Law 1988, 19) While a further discussion of ontology and epistemology is beyond the scope of this thesis introduction, for Gill they draw our attention to and help explain how perspectives as a whole, as well as their scientific approach or their specific theories, tend to be evaluated on the basis of their scope (the period of time over which they apply), explanatory power (the range of phenomena they cover), consistency (the ability to be consistent flows from a sufficiently broad framework, or said another way, a broad enough framework allows for consistency in explanation), practical implications (whether and how they contribute to the humanity’s survival and development, and in whose interests they operate), and reflexivity (the perspective’s awareness of the

origins, conditions of existence, and practical implications of itself and other perspectives). (Gill and Law 1988, 19-23)

From the above discussion it should be obvious that perspectives are more than research programs with basic assumptions and concepts, methodological procedures and specific theories. In this regard, Gill points our attention in the direction of the breadth and social basis of perspectives. He suggests that perspectives “encompass the theoretical and practical outlook, worldview and identity of different constellations and coalitions of political and social movements and institutions.” (Gill 1990, 8) He continues that they involve “not only an ideology but also a theory which is adopted by, or related to, certain interests.” (Gill 1990, 8) Additionally, he quotes Robert Cox, who suggests that a perspective’s theories are “always for someone and for some purpose.” (Gill 1990, 8) Gill leaves us with the thought that perspectives both prioritize different concerns and contribute to the “construction of interests and identity for individuals, groups, classes and nations.” As such they are bound up in the “political mobilisation of constellations of social forces.” (Gill 1990, 10)

Cox takes off where Gill left us, by looking at the relationship between perspectives and social and political interests. For Cox, perspectives view the world from a “standpoint definable in terms of nation or social class, of dominance or subordination, of rising or declining power, of a sense of immobility or of present crisis, of past experience, and of hopes and expectations about the future.” (quoted in Gill 1991, 8) For Cox, to understand a particular theory, one has to understand the standpoint from which it originates. This is particularly true of theories that “transcend [their] own perspective,” (Gill 1990, 8) or that in Gill’s words “appeal to universality.” (Gill 1990, 9) For Cox, there is “no such thing as a theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space. When any theory so represents itself, it

is the more important to examine it as ideology, and to lay bare its concealed perspective.” (quoted in Gill 1991, 8)

At this point it will be useful to provide a summary and synthesis of my understanding of the term perspective. My working definition of the term perspective builds upon but is broader than what is traditionally meant by the term research program. For the purposes of this thesis I’ll label a perspective’s basic assumptions (ontological and epistemological) and key concepts, as well as its method of concept formation and theory development (analytical methodology) as its overall method, intellectual approach or science. The specific theories or analyses that are produced with the aid of this approach will fall into the category of application (or doctrine). But by the term application or doctrine, and here’s where the term perspective is clearly more than a research program, I’ll also be referring to not only the practical implications of the perspective and its theories, but also its particular policy recommendations and proposals for political activity. All perspectives then, whether they are explicit about this or not, have a social basis, a set of material interests and motivations, a method or intellectual approach, and an application or doctrine, by which is meant a set of specific analyses and proposals for political activity. By example then, in this thesis, unless otherwise specified, the term Marxism will be used to connote the Marxist perspective as a whole and not just its method.

On “Owning” Perspectives

Moving onto our next question, but remaining on perspectives in general, we ask how do intellectuals come to their own understanding of the perspective that they will employ? Cox assists us in beginning this inquiry by looking at how an individual develops a perspective. According to Cox the perspective an intellectual takes up is a product of experience and thought. As already alluded to, Cox suggests that

perspectives and thinking are rooted in time and place. They have a context. They are influenced by two major components. First, there is the author's experience of the historical world, and of structures and events that prompt enquiry. Second, there are the perspectives of others who are responding at the same time but in different ways to these historical structures and events. (Cox and Schechter 2002, xxiii) Some of these perspectives one accepts and adopts; others one rejects. In another instance Cox suggests that theory evolves through controversy among distinct views of reality. For Cox, there are "two principle factors that shape theory." First, there is the "objective movement of history" that is "continually throwing up new combinations of forces that interact with one another." Second there are the "subjective perceptions of those who contemplate these forces with a view to understanding and acting upon the movement of history." (Cox and Schechter 2002, 26)

While Cox is useful on the general points of how an individual arrives at a perspective and how historical development demands an intellectual response, as an iconoclast he is uninterested in the question of how intellectuals working within a particular lineage pick up, work with, and come to their own understanding of a particular established perspective. For this we briefly turn to the work of Derek Sayer. For Sayer, "In the social sciences reflection on established paradigms is a normal, and perfectly proper, way in which problems are clarified and disciplines advance, particularly in times of theoretical crisis." (Sayer 1987, vii) Sayer offers the examples of a Durkheim or a Keynes, whose foundational work "does constitute a paradigm, in Kuhn's sense – a framework within which substantive researches continually go on." (Sayer 1987, vii) For Sayer, "the form which theoretical debate takes is often that of questioning return to, and reinterpretation of, the writings of an acknowledged past master. The context of such a discussion is often a growing awareness of empirical anomalies which the relevant paradigms have difficulties encompassing." (Sayer 1987,

vii) Finally, and most relevant to our discussion, Sayer suggests that “every generation reappropriates its intellectual heritage in accord with its needs and priorities.” (Sayer 1987, vii)

Thus, with respect to the more specific question of how working within a lineage an intellectual or collective intellectual may come to understand and employ such a perspective, thus contributing to its development, we can draw on both Cox and Sayer. Both Cox and Sayer start off with the demands that historical developments place before intellectuals. While Cox emphasizes how an intellectual comes to his own perspective in dialogue with other perspectives, Sayer emphasizes how a generation comes to its own perspective by a return to and reinterpretation of a past master, “[reappropriating] its intellectual heritage in accord with its needs and priorities.” (Sayer 1987, vii) As can be seen, while Cox focuses on the individual intellectual, Sayer is focused on the generation in the context of a lineage.³

On Rejuvenating The Marxist Perspective

Next, we turn our attention from perspectives in general to the Marxist perspective. But before really diving into a discussion of the manner in which an intellectual who operates within and from the standpoint of a specific perspective comes to their own particular understanding of that perspective, it will be useful to comment briefly upon the way in which an intellectual is drawn to such a perspective. Of the two classical or foundational intellectuals we explore in this thesis, Gramsci is perhaps the more reflexive. He seems to imply that either an individual inherits it and is unaware of its influence over his life, or he is drawn to it because it both makes sense of the world in ways that others do not and suggests a way forward that others

³ To the extent Sayer addresses the individual intellectual he does so by way of seeing the individual intellectual as an exemplar of a generation (e.g. he does this with Cohen’s revisionist Marxism).

are incapable of. It would appear that for Marxist intellectuals their attraction to the Marxist perspective is often a product of their encounter with it in the political movement they join, or as the case may be for the Neo-Gramscians and many young intellectuals today, the academic discipline they enter. Thus it is both the perspective's insights as well as the activity of those who operate from the perspective's vantage point that is the attractor.

Now, we turn our attention directly to addressing the question - how have previous generations of intellectuals come to understand, employ, master, contribute to and fight for the influence of the Marxist perspective? This thesis, focusing as it does on intellectuals who operate within the Marxist perspective or lineage, can make use of the complimentary insights of both Cox and Sayer discussed above. Together they help us understand how Marxist intellectuals, confronted by the historical developments and challenges that their day and age throws in their course, the same challenges that attracted them to the Marxist perspective in the first place, come to their own understanding of the Marxist perspective through their simultaneous engagement with both the prevailing forms of the Marxist perspective and rival perspectives of their day as well as a return to earlier moments (and exemplars of these moments) in their intellectual heritage.

Indeed, it would appear that in many instances it is the failures, limitations, flaws and inability of the prevailing forms of Marxism, the social sciences and common sense to explain pressing contemporary social challenges that spurs Marxist intellectuals to return to their intellectual heritage with the hopes of arriving at their own or a deeper understanding of and competency in using the Marxist perspective. In such a process these intellectuals have both made additions to and clarifications of the Marxist method as well as employed the method in particular analyses of their own period.

Despite their various approaches and the distinctness of their terms, the scholars reviewed in this thesis in one way or another understand this process as one of reconstructing or rejuvenating the Marxist perspective. These intellectuals seek to re-invent and rejuvenate Marxism not because they believe it to be dead, but rather because they see that it remains of potential use in grappling with the situations that confront them. For this potential use to be realized they are confronted with the task of freeing the perspective in general and method in particular of flawed encrustations or prevailing limited interpretations.

Thus in this context we can restate the question stated above as how have previous generations of intellectuals rejuvenated the Marxist perspective? This is the broad research question within which this thesis exists. It encapsulates the basic approach of the thesis that will be to look at how other generations of intellectuals (historical and contemporary) have attempted to rejuvenate Marxism. As already suggested, such a question can be broken down into two sub-questions that arguably correspond to two dialectical moments in the rejuvenation process. These are: 1.) How do intellectuals come to own the Marxist perspective? 2.) How do intellectuals fight for the influence of the Marxist perspective?

Moment One: On Owning the Marxist Perspective

With respect to the first question, we can once again begin with Gramsci who suggests that even when one picks up a perspective, one has to make it his or her own. Here Lynne Lawner, who edited one of the first English language collections of Gramsci's prison letters, is of use. From her study of Gramsci, she concludes that "critical thought – specifically, Marxist critical thought, or what Gramsci terms 'the philosophy of praxis' – is not a level of consciousness that can be immediately acquired. It depends on discussions, debate, historical analyses carried out by those

who identify themselves with the working class and its history.” (Gramsci 1973, 45) Lawner continues that “the point of departure of a Marxist thinker is always culture as a whole and not, as many people argue abstractly, a presumed set of Marxist doctrines torn from their original context. Indeed, Marxism demands a constant confrontation with a historically determined culture, together with the effort to supersede it – that is to make that culture scientific by removing every trace of ideology.” (Gramsci 1973, 45)

Here Lawner helps us with a number of points. First, and perhaps most importantly, she remakes the distinction we made earlier, between Marxist critical thought (scientific method) and Marxist doctrine applicable to a particular context. It is a key argument of this thesis that making this distinction between science and doctrine, method and conclusions (theoretical and practical), allows for a true rejuvenation of the Marxist perspective. Second she suggests that the acquisition and mastery of Marxist critical thought involves a collective struggle with the prevailing ideas and ways of thinking in the culture or common sense of the day.

Thus as already suggested, spurred on by the demands of historical developments and challenges, and the inadequacies of prevailing intellectual perspectives or currents (Marxisms of the day, social science perspectives, ruling class ideology, and common sense), Marxists return to the perspectives of past masters (either a Marx, Gramsci, or the lineage as a whole) with an eye to appropriating their critical thought processes or methods. This is the critical element for those seeking to truly own the Marxist perspective in such a way so as to be able to employ it. It differentiates those who employ the conclusions of prevailing forms of the perspective from those who seek to come to new conclusions based on their own critical thought processes. It’s what allows them to wield the entire perspective and not just act on the basis of its distinct parts.

Having first come to or been attracted to the Marxist perspective, an intellectual comes to own it (in the sense of a workable understanding of it) and employ it via debate with, critique of, and polemics against their own pre-Marxist or pre-movement intellectual background, the intellectual environment of the society at large, and the prevailing forms of Marxism either within the movement, movement current, or other situation (academic, etc.) into which they enter. Thus while the Marxist intellectual can be seen as adopting an established perspective or approach, in making such a perspective or approach his or her own, there is still a very definite struggle against his or her own baggage, and the baggage of the society's and the perspective or movement's intellectual background.

Moment Two: On Fighting for the Influence of the Marxist Perspective

Thus it is largely via critiques and polemics that organic intellectuals define their perspective in relation to other perspectives. We see their perspective emerge as a product of its debates with contending perspectives and historical reality. However, and in tune with the more widely viewed understanding of polemics, for Marxist intellectuals critiques and polemics are also a means of engaging with and defeating contending perspectives either internal to the perspective or external to it. A significant part of the process of the intellectual's fight for the influence of his/her perspective involves replicating the process that happened for him/her for others. As Gramsci states, through such a process a perspective "must prove its efficacy and vitality." (Gramsci 1971, 433) In Marx's terms this takes us from the moment of inquiry, through Bertell Ollman's moment of intellectual reconstruction (Marx's self clarification) to the moment of presentation. Here there must be concern for and considerations about the audience.

Polemics are thus a potential means through which the intellectual's perspective may become embedded in and influential over the movement rather than becoming sectarian and isolated from it. We'll return to Gramsci's views on the function of polemics in the chapter focusing on his work. In summary, we can see that the intellectual's perspective emerges from, is used in and for, and achieves influence and potential hegemony via such a polemical process.

On The Focus And Structure Of This Thesis: Reappropriating The Marxist Method

Given our understanding of rejuvenation as a process consisting of these two moments (coming to own and then fighting for a perspective), and taking into account space and time considerations, the focus of this thesis will be on the first of these two moments. And given the above discussion of this moment, the primary research question for this thesis will become how have previous generations of intellectuals appropriated (in the case of Marx) or reappropriated (in the case of Gramsci) the Marxist method? This question can be further broken down into two component parts: 1.) How does the Marxist under investigation come to his understanding of the Marxist method? 2.) What is the method that he comes to?⁴

It is possible to frame the structure of this thesis historically in terms of Marx's creation of the Marxist perspective and then Gramsci and Burawoy's reconstruction of the Marxist perspective. The historical chapter on Marx, who begins the intellectual lineage, is followed by a historical chapter on Gramsci, an early example of the reappropriation of the Marx's method, and then a more contemporary chapter on Burawoy's reconstruction of Marxism.

The Marx chapter will draw primarily upon the works of two interpreters who stand out for their ability to note and avoid many of the above flaws. The Gramsci

⁴ Here we are talking about an investigation that includes both diachronic and synchronic analyses.

chapter will depend heavily upon Esteve Morera. However, I also will be in the position to bring to bear on my study of Gramsci what I have found in my study of Marx. The Gramsci chapter will be organized around two themes. First it will explore what I call Gramsci's envisioned but unrealized plan for the reconstruction of Marxism. Second it will review what I refer to as Gramsci's actual reconstruction of Marxism.

In the Burawoy chapter I focus on a contemporary reconstruction of the Marxist perspective. What emerges in the Burawoy chapter is a serious polemic in the tradition discussed above. As such the Burawoy chapter provides the vehicle for: 1.) integrating and synthesizing the lessons of the thesis; and 2.) bringing these lessons to bear on a critique of Burawoy that thus models a polemic as a means of intellectual reconstruction and presentation, reappropriation and rejuvenation. Here I find that Burawoy's is a very shallow or superficial return to the Marxist lineage and perspective.

Each chapter of this thesis builds on the work of the previous chapter. The Marx chapter gives me greater leverage for going after Gramsci and understanding what he comes up with and how he comes up with it. Together the first two chapters give me sufficient leverage to really go after Burawoy and in the process begin to articulate my understanding of how to reappropriate Marx's method as a step towards the reconstruction of the Marxist perspective.

CHAPTER 2

KARL MARX

In this chapter I cover the following terrain. I will first explore the reasons for studying Karl Marx and his method. I will then discuss the challenges involved in such an endeavor. I will then present an approach for such a study. Finally, I will then offer my developing understanding of Marx's method.

Why Study Marx and His Method?

There are several significant reasons why it is important to begin this thesis with a study of Marx's method. First, he is the acknowledged past master, the eponymous figure, who founds the intellectual heritage and to whom others return in their efforts to rejuvenate Marxism. Thus, we need to have a working knowledge of his method in order to be able to develop our own understanding of how Gramsci and others reappropriate his method. Second, it's important to begin our work with a return to him because he establishes this intellectual perspective out of his own evaluations, critiques, appropriations and syntheses of the prevailing intellectual perspectives of his day – German philosophy of the Hegelian school, French social historiography and political theory and English political economy. As such much guidance can be learned from Marx on how to study, critique, appropriate and synthesize the works of others into one's own intellectual efforts. In more than a slight sense he sets the mold for such reappropriating intellectual activity.

Third, as suggested in the introduction to this thesis, the appropriation of a perspective's critical thought process or method is the first step to mastering and employing that perspective. Bertell Ollman supports this notion by suggesting that

our ability to really understand, employ and revise Marxism in general, and its theories in particular, depends on knowing the dialectical method that Marx employed. “If Marx’s theories deal essentially with his understanding of capitalist society, its origins, and probable future, then Marx’s dialectical method is how he went about acquiring this understanding, including how he structured it and the order and forms in which he presented it.” (Ollman 1993, 1) Ollman asserts that a thorough knowledge of Marx’s method is necessary because “it is only upon grasping Marx’s assumptions and the means, forms and techniques with which he constructs his explanations of capitalism that we can effectively use, develop and revise, where necessary, what he said.”

(Ollman 2003, 137)

Additionally, Ollman suggests

“Marx’s method is not only a means of understanding his theoretical statements but of amending them to take account of developments that have occurred since his time ... What is required (and has been for some time) is a new intellectual reconstruction of the concrete totality, one that balances its respect for Marx’s writings with an equally healthy respect for the research of modern scholars, including non-Marxists.” (Ollman 2003, 154)

The Challenges in Such an Endeavor

However, in the effort to understand and master Marx’s method, we are confronted with a number of challenges. In particular we are confronted with the way in which Marxism in general and Marx’s method in particular have been misrepresented. This may in large part stem from the arguable observation that Marx doesn’t offer a comprehensive and easily accessible account of his method or the steps by which he came to it.

Many have commented on Marx’s failure to offer a clear and concise statement of his method. As we will see in the next chapter, Gramsci comments that the founder

had never “systematically expounded” his conception of the world. (Gramsci 1971, 382) For Gramsci, Marxism “was born in the form of aphorisms and practical criteria for the purely accidental reason that its founder dedicated his intellectual forces to other problems, particularly economic (which he treated in systematic form).” (Gramsci 1971, 426) Gramsci followed up on this statement with the comment that “in these practical criteria and these aphorisms [was] implicit an entire conception of the world, a philosophy.”(Gramsci 1971, 426) For Gramsci the “elements of the conception were implicit” in the entirety of Marx’s “multiform intellectual work.” (Gramsci 1971, 382) Elsewhere Gramsci suggested that “the elements of this new mode of conceiving philosophy [were] contained in aphorisms or in some way dispersed through the writings of the founder of the philosophy of praxis, and that it [was] necessary precisely to distinguish these elements and develop them coherently.” (Gramsci 1971, 464)

While it could reasonably be said that Gramsci did not have access to all of Marx’s writings, which were either as of then unpublished, untranslated into Italian, or unavailable to him in his prison cells, Ollman concurs with his estimate. Ollman suggests that at least in part many of the flaws in interpretations of Marx’s method stem from Marx’s own failure to appreciate the need for and act upon producing a clear and concise statement of his method.⁵

In this light, if Marx’s method is to be acquired, it will have to be synthesized, articulated and made explicit from his entire life’s work, a huge amount of literary activity. Such a project would require reviewing both the passages where he is reflexive about his approach, and the many more passages where he employs and thus displays this approach. Obviously a project like this is beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁵ According to Ollman while Engels in his *AntiDuhring* (1878) attempted to produce a clear statement of Marx’s method, but in simplifying some aspects of dialectics he simultaneously over-schematized and rigidified processes that Marx had used with exemplary flexibility. (Ollman 1993, 2)

For the student relatively new to Marxism one place to start such an endeavor is with the works of Marxist scholars who have taken on such a project.

However, and especially given my objectives, what I have found is that there are many flaws or limitations in the work of those who have interpreted Marx's method. Ollman points our attention to what he calls a series of four (internal) assaults on Marxism – revisionism, officialism, sectarianism, and eclecticism. He notes that a significant part of each of these assaults has been to misrepresent Marxism.

From my perspective, some of the limitations we encounter in the work of Marx's interpreters consist of⁶: 1.) confusing Marx's theoretical assertions and doctrine for his method; 2.) studying Marx's method as if there is nothing else to Marxism; 3.) studying only a few parts of Marx's method (and some who do this suggest that this is all there is to his method)⁷; 4.) prioritizing or focusing on only a few passages where Marx discusses his method at the expense of studying his life's work; 5.) presenting the Marxist method as if there was just one monolithic method as opposed to acknowledging the many different forms it takes at different moments and with different individuals or collectives; 6.) viewing it unreflexively through the lens of a prevailing conception of science; 7.) viewing it explicitly through the lens of a prevailing conception of science which is simultaneously taken to be the only conception of science. In the last scenario the process of attempting to portray the Marxist method as scientific actually distorts or misrepresents the Marxist method by

⁶ Many of the same flaws can be seen in those who attempt to interpret Gramsci's method as well.

⁷ In this context Ollman suggests that discussions of Marx's method often fail to discuss the relation of the many elements or moments of his method to each other. "Most discussions of Marx's method have focused either on his philosophy, particularly the laws of dialectics as outlined by Engels, or on the strategy of exposition used in *Capital I*. Even when accurate these accounts are lopsided and useless for those interested in adopting Marx's method for their work. Numerous assumptions and procedures are left out and their place in the construction and elaboration of Marx's theories is vague at best." (Ollman 2003, M and PS)

failing to historicize Marx's method in terms of the prevailing intellectual, methodological and political currents of his day.

How To Proceed?

We can conclude our discussion of the challenges involved in studying Marx's method with the simple statement from David Walker that there has been a "lack of thoroughness" in establishing what constitutes Marx's method. (Walker 2001, 2) In a field predominated by such lack of thoroughness, Ollman and Walker stand out as offering two quite thorough treatments of Marx's method. What differentiates Ollman's treatment of Marx's method from Walker's is his commitment to use Marx's method to study Marx's method. It is just such a technique that this chapter attempts to employ.

However, as we turn our attention to Ollman, we see that he doesn't accomplish what he sets out to accomplish in part because he doesn't employ the full approach that he implies would ultimately be necessary. He doesn't achieve his objectives because he doesn't follow his own (though derived from Marx) research guidelines. Ollman, a self-identified Marxist, employs his understanding of Marx's method in his inquiry into and presentation of Marx's method. Thus we can hold him accountable to the requirements of this method. According to Ollman and I agree, one of the main requirements of such a method is that system is studied before history. Essentially the problem is that while Ollman offers an impressive yet limited system/schema investigation of Marx's method he never gets to the historical investigation.

While Ollman successfully investigates Marx's method in relationship to the other aspects of Marx's perspective and the various relations between the element of Marx's perspective with each other and the whole of Marxism, he fails to place his

discussion of Marxism and the Marxist method in particular in relationship to those other intellectual approaches to understanding social reality in general and capitalism in particular. Yet, the fundamental element of Marx's method is that something can only be understood in relationship to the broader context in which it exists. Thus, an accurate understanding of Marx's method would have to investigate its relationship to these other intellectual approaches. As will be seen, this problem and its resolution is related to and addressed by the role of critique in Marx's method. This misstep on Olman's part also arguably underpins his failure to engage in a historical investigation of Marx's method.

There are two problems with an approach such as Ollman's that doesn't include an historical investigation of Marx's method. First, if something, as Marx says according to Ollman, is both its systemic and historical relations, then to stop at a systemic analysis and not include a historical analysis, is to not adequately understand that something. For Ollman, understanding a thing's history is essential to understanding the thing since it is part of the thing, not just the historical context of the thing. Since part of something is its history, to really understand that something you have to understand its history. Thus, an explanation of that something will have to include a discussion of its history.

Second, in leaving out of his presentation of Marx's method how Marx came to his method Ollman fails to offer those interested in employing Marx's method valuable insight into how they themselves can develop a Marxist method. Lawner, referred to earlier, suggests that the acquisition and mastery of Marxist critical thought involves a collective struggle with the prevailing ideas and ways of thinking in the culture or common sense of the day. Given this I suggest, contrary to Ollman, that studying how others have done this could be of use to those trying to do so today.

It is my position that not doing the historical investigation limits Ollman's ability to both accurately understand and present it in a form that makes it accessible. Then why does Ollman not do the historical investigation?

Ollman's approach in his own words is "unhistorical." (Ollman 1971, xvi) The fact that Ollman makes a few references to the sources of different elements of Marx's method does not contradict his claim that his approach is unhistorical. In fact Ollman neither claims nor takes on the task of understanding the development of Marx's method as a whole. Ollman, writing in 1973, is fairly explicit stating that "he doesn't pay much attention to method in the different periods of Marx's life." (Ollman 2003, 135-154)

Ollman's rationale for not doing the historical investigation that his overall method would suggest is two fold, methodological and substantive. Methodologically he suggests that system has to be done before history. In this we can whole heartedly agree, in part because a critical review of David Walker's work (which fails to bring in to view lots of aspects that would be brought in if system was done first) shows us the limitations of a historical investigation that starts with too narrow a system understanding. We can also acknowledge that the work of systematizing Marx's method is quite involved. Ollman has done an impressive job in this respect. But this does not excuse Ollman or offer sufficient rationale for his not having done the historical investigation to date, thirty years after having taken on the project of explaining Marx's method.

Substantively, Ollman suggests that there is little in the way of real development in Marx's method after a very early point. In part this is a statement of opposition to the epistemological break thesis⁸ that prevailed for so long in Marxist

⁸ This thesis was first advocated by Althusser. He suggested that there was a clear epistemological rupture and discontinuity between Marx's early and later works.

scholarship. Here we can turn to Walker who shows us that it is possible to offer an account of Marx's method as it evolved over different periods while not subscribing to the epistemological break thesis, thus discounting Ollman's substantive rationale as well. Walker agrees with Ollman that there was not major break in Marx's method over his life's work and that rather it developed along a consistent trajectory. Yet he differs from Ollman in that he displays the potential of a historical approach to show the subtle developments of Marx's method over the various stages of its development.

What I walk away with from this critique of Ollman is an appreciation for the necessity (for an accurate understanding of the approach), utility (for an employable understanding of the approach) and possibility (as indicated by Walker and others, albeit with Ollman's insightful perspective of studying system before history) of actually carrying out a historical component of the approach to understanding Marx's method.

One further point of critique remains to be made. Ollman suggests that the historical aspect of something can be broken down into both that which precedes it, its past, and that which follows it, its history. Thus from this vantage point there are actually two aspects of the history of Marx's method that Ollman disregards. In this sense it's both necessary and useful to look at what led up to Marx's mature method and what came after it. With respect to the first aspect, I'll take some initial steps towards it at the end of this chapter. With respect to the second element, some initial steps will be made in the rest of the thesis.

Essentially the approach that emerges from my critique doesn't end up differing much from the approach that Ollman suggests. It just insists that a complete investigation require both a thorough systemic investigation and historical investigation. It can be added here that Ollman's work, though not him directly, implicitly suggests that I think of the questions "what was Marx's method?" and "how

did he arrive at it?” as two parts of a single question – “what was Marx’s method?” (both in a synchronic or systemic sense and in a diachronic or historical sense).

Marx’s Method – A Systemic Investigation

Setting Up the Investigation

In this section I’ll be presenting my understanding of Marx’s method in both its system and historical relations (*or senses*). In arriving at a schema of presentation of Marx’s method from a system vantage point, I’ll move through both Ollman and Walker’s schemas that set the stage for my own.

While Ollman defines Marxism as a unique combination of science, critique, vision and strategy for revolution (doctrine), it is with his discussion of Marx’s science or method that we are concerned here. Writing in 1973, Ollman first abstracts, characterizes or schematizes Marx’s dialectical method as “existing on five levels, representing successive stages in its practice.” (Ollman 2003, 139) Specifically, Ollman arrives at this schematization by “[abstracting] Marx’s method from his theories in order to focus on certain aspects of this method ...” (Ollman 2003, 146) which he admittedly acknowledges Marx never himself explicitly summarized in this way. For Ollman these five levels or stages include: ontology, epistemology, inquiry, intellectual reconstruction, and exposition. Since for Ollman other methods in the social sciences could probably be broken down this way, Marx’s method was distinguished by his consciousness of these stages and the way he characterized each one. (Ollman 2003, 139)

In later writings Ollman expands his abstraction of Marx’s dialectical method by adding an additional moment, the moment of praxis, to what he comes to call six successive moments of Marx’s dialectical method. [See Figure 1.] At this point he clarifies that the “six moments are not traversed once and for all but again and again.”

(Ollman 2003, 157) Ollman suggests that Marx, in his “every attempt to grasp and expound on dialectical truths and to act upon them,” improved “his ability to organize his thinking dialectically and to inquire further and more deeply into the mutually dependent processes to which” he also belonged. (Ollman 2003, 187) While Ollman presents these moments one at a time, he alerts us to the interaction between them and the role of repetition in contributing to the progress of what for Marx is an integral approach. (Ollman 2003, 150)

Figure 1. Ollman’s Schematization of Marxism and Marx’s Method

Marxism = Critique + Science + Vision + Strategy (Doctrine/Praxis)

Marx’s Method =

1. Ontology
2. Epistemology
3. Moment of Inquiry
4. Moment of Intellectual Reconstruction
5. Moment of Presentation
6. Praxis

Moving towards a discussion of Walker’s three-level schematization of method in general, we see that Walker starts this discussion with the recognition that the term method is commonly understood and employed in a variety of ways. These include: 1.) a general philosophical position which gives some general sense of the nature of the world and points to some general methodology; a basic disposition or orientation suggesting some broad approach; 2.) a broad heuristic or set of broad/general guidelines for investigation or research; 3.) a particular procedure (or set of stricter

rules or steps to be followed such as the method of immanent critique) or technique (such as the Feurbachian inversion technique) that may be applied at a very specific level to particular cases. (Walker 2001, 178)

Walker goes on to suggest that in actuality any method will actually address all of these different senses or levels of the term method. A method will “incorporate a general philosophical position, a broad heuristic, and certain procedures and techniques.” (Walker 2001, 178) For Walker all methods consist of or operate on these three distinct yet interconnected levels. [See Figure 2.]

Figure 2. Walker’s Schematization of Method in General

1. General Philosophical Position
2. General Guidelines for Investigation (Broad Research Guidelines)
3. Particular Procedures or Techniques (Specific Research Techniques)

At this point I assert that we can apply Walker’s schematization of method in general to Ollman’s schematization of Marx’s method in particular and come up with a more accessible schematization that abstracts Marx’s ontology and epistemology as his fundamental philosophical assumptions and abstract Marx’s moments of inquiry, intellectual reconstruction and presentation as his broad research guidelines.

While I understand Ollman’s inclusion of praxis as the sixth element in his schematization of Marx’s method (it definitely like the other elements of Marx’s method impacts on and refines theoretical assertions and concrete analyses) I think there is sufficient justification for separating out praxis from the method. As discussed in the thesis introduction as well as earlier in this chapter and subsequent chapters, one of the major stumbling blocks in understanding Marx’s method is to

confuse it with his theoretical assertions and doctrine. Thus to avoid this pitfall we can separate out praxis while still drawing attention to the very real way in which it impacts on analysis. However such an impact can be understood as the dialectical relationship between two elements of Marx's perspective as a whole and not as the relationship between two elements internal to Marx's method.

Before proceeding to a discussion of Marx's schema, one final addition needs to be made. Contra to Ollman who leaves critique as an element of Marxism external to Marx's method, I suggest we abstract critique or polemic as an aspect of Marx's method, both as an integral element of Marx's underpinning philosophical assumptions and broad research guidelines, as well as a particular technique that he employed. More will be said on this shortly. [See Figure 3.]

Figure 3. Wider's Schematization of Marx's Method

1. General Philosophical Position/Fundamental Philosophical Assumptions
 - Ontology
 - Epistemology
2. Broad Research Guidelines
 - Moment of Inquiry
 - Moment of Intellectual Reconstruction
 - Moment of Presentation
3. Specific Research Techniques
 - Critique

The Actual Investigation

My system understanding of Marx's method explores both its internal and external system relations. While in the main I will use Ollman's work to address the systemic aspects of Marx's method, I start with a brief reference to the method's external relations, something which Ollman does not explicitly draw much attention to and is not an explicit element of Ollman's presentation of Marx's method. The main element to explore here will be critique or polemic as one of the main motivations and means of Marx's method, infusing every aspect of his method. While we will see shortly that every aspect of Marx's method developed in polemic with prevailing methods and perspectives, here we can state that every aspect of Marx's method was itself a polemic with such prevailing methods. It was through his critique of contending theorizations of capitalism that Marx established his own critique of capitalism as a whole. Marx was interested in both the "interaction between real processes and the ways in which they [were] understood." (Ollman 2003, 146) On this note we can see that Marx's *Capital* was not only an investigation of how capitalism worked, but also an investigation of how it was understood by bourgeois ideology. As will be seen in the next chapter, Gramsci draws significant attention to this element of Marx's method.

Turning to the internal relations of Marxism's method, as suggested earlier I'll employ Walker's categorization of a method's fundamental philosophical assumptions and research guidelines. With respect to Marxism's fundamental philosophical assumptions, we include its ontology and epistemology.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Marx's Method

Marx's Ontology

According to Stephen Gill, “ontology refers to the nature of reality and its underlying units, which form the starting point for theoretical explanation.” (Gill 1988, 19) Ollman suggests that Marx's ontology involved his “most fundamental assumptions regarding the nature and organization of the world” (Ollman 2003, 139), mainly materialism and the concept of internally related parts.

For Ollman Marx's materialism consisted of the belief that “the world [was] real and [existed] apart from us and whether we [experienced] it or not.” (Ollman 2003, 139) Yet this is as far as Ollman goes with a discussion of Marx's materialism. Walker expands on Marx's materialism for us. For Walker, three interconnected theses – realism, primacy of matter and naturalism – taken together constituted “Marx's materialist ontological beliefs.” (Walker 2001, 64) For Walker Marx's realism thesis consisted of the view “that there [did] exist a world independent of our perception of it; that matter [existed] separately and independently of thought/mind/spirit.” (Walker 2001, 60) This did not contradict the view that “human beings transform nature/reality by praxis, and that in this sense they have a creative role with regard to nature.” (Walker 2001, 60) Marx's primacy of matter thesis, stated that matter was primary in the sense that it could exist without mind while mind could not exist without matter. Walker's understanding of Marx's naturalism thesis is that here Marx viewed the “natural world [as constituting] the entirety of reality, with the natural world being opposed to the supernatural, so nature (reality) [was] not derived from or dependent upon any supernatural entity.” (Walker 2001, 63-64) Walker adds to this thesis Marx's dual use of the term nature to refer at different times to the “totality of reality” or that part of reality that was “opposed to society/human beings.”

(Walker 2001, 65) For Marx human beings were both a part of nature and apart from nature.⁹

For Ollman, however, the main and most distinctive element of Marx's ontology was its "conception of reality as a totality composed of internally related parts" and its "conception of these parts as expandable, such that each one in the fullness of its relations can represent the totality." (Ollman 2003, 139) Ollman suggests that such a conception of reality can be seen as "a version of what historically has been called the philosophy of internal relations." (Ollman 2003, 139) For the purposes of this discussion I break Ollman's portrayal of Marx's philosophy of internal relations down into two key aspects – Marx's conception of the whole or totality and his conception of the parts.

For Ollman, Marx's "dialectical and materialist conception ... [viewed] the whole as the structured interdependence of its parts – the interacting events, processes, and conditions of the real world – as observed from any major part." (Ollman 2003, 140) Ollman suggests that the whole changes and "realizes possibilities that were inherent in earlier stages" via the constant interaction and development of its parts. "Flux and interaction, projected back into the origins of the present and forward into its possible futures, are the chief distinguishing characteristics of this world and [as will be seen] are taken for granted in any inquiry." (Ollman 2003, 140)

In terms of the relationship of the whole with its parts, Ollman notes four sorts of relations that can be found in Marx: 1.) "the whole shapes the parts to make them more functional within this particular whole;" 2.) "the whole gives meaning and

⁹ Marx's philosophical materialism set the basis for his historical materialism or social ontology. Walker looks to Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Preface* for Marx's classic statement of his historical materialism thesis. For Walker this thesis is at the heart of Marxism. Walker suggests that Marx's historical materialism was "an explanatory thesis put forward by Marx to demystify history and politics, to guide analysis of and research into society. The historical materialism thesis did this by focusing on history and production and thus bringing "materialism down from general abstractions to concrete specifics." (Walker 2001, 74)

relative importance to each part in terms of this function;” 3.) “the whole expresses itself through the part, so that the part can also be taken as a form of the whole;” 4.) “the relations of the parts with each other, as suggested above, forge the contours and meaning of the whole, transform it into an ongoing system with a history, an outcome, and an impact.”^{10 11} (Ollman 2003, 140)

We now move onto the second main aspect of the earlier statement of Marx’s philosophy of internal relations. Here Ollman discusses how Marx went further than those who pointed to how “everything in the world [was] related to everything else” by “interiorizing this interdependence within each element, so that the conditions of its existence [were] taken to be part of what it [was].” (Ollman 2003, 139) On this point Ollman offers Marx’s understanding of capital as an example of this. For Marx capital was “not simply the physical means of production but [included] the whole pattern of social and economic relations that [enabled] these means to appear and function as they [did].” (Ollman 2003, 139) The relations referred to were both spatial and temporal, or systemic and historical, such that not only did Marx’s conception of capital include “its actual ties with labor, commodity, value, capitalists, and workers – or whatever [contributed] to its appearance and functioning” – but also its past and future (primitive accumulation, accumulation, concentration of capital). (Ollman 2003, 14)

¹⁰ Marx’s dialectical and materialist conception of totality contrasts with the atomistic conception of totality “that views the whole as the sum of simple facts” and the formalist conception of totality that “attributes an identity to the whole independent of its parts and asserts the absolute predominance of this whole over the parts.” (Ollman 2003, 140)

¹¹ With respect to the relations between parts, and the relations between the parts and the whole, Ollman draws our attention to Marx’s dialectical laws and categories (i.e. identity/difference, interpenetration of opposites, quantity/quality change, and development through contradiction). Ollman characterizes Marx’s understanding of these laws as “generalizations about the kinds of change and interaction that occur in a world understood in terms of internal relations.” (Ollman 2003, 141) Walker similarly suggests that for Marx the key dialectical categories were interconnection, change and contradiction. (Walker 2001, 84)

In summary, Marx's ontology viewed the world as existing independent of our perception of it, yet undergoing constant change through our interaction with it, and as devoid of the clear-cut classificational boundaries that distinguished the common sense approach. Marx's conception of the real world was "an infinite number of mutually dependent processes – with no clear or fixed boundaries – that [coalesced] to form a loosely structured whole or totality." (Ollman 2003, 157) Indeed in the common sense approach, with its philosophy of external relations, the boundaries between things and thus of units were taken to be determined and discoverable once and for all. While Marx's relational view accepted the reality of the external world it held that the conceptual activity of human thought was responsible for the precise forms in which humans grasped the world. It is to this conceptual activity that we now turn in our discussion of Marx's epistemology.

Marx's Epistemology

In this section, I look at the importance that Marx placed on the role of abstraction in his epistemology and overall method, at Marx's critique of prevailing notions of abstraction, at the particulars of Marx's method of abstraction and finally at the other aspects of his epistemology.

As has already been discussed, in Ollman's view Marx's philosophy of internal relations refused to subscribe to a notion of clear-cut, determined and eternal boundaries between the many interconnected and interdependent processes in reality. Yet for Marx thinking about reality and communicating an understanding of reality required breaking reality down into manageable parts. For Marx it was the process of abstraction that "[transformed] the innumerable qualities [presented] to our senses into meaningful particulars." (Ollman 2003, 141)

Referencing what he calls Marx's most explicit statement on his process of abstraction, Ollman looks at how Marx's method "[started] from the 'real concrete' (the world as it presents itself to us) and [proceeded] through 'abstraction' (the mental activity of breaking this whole down into the mental units with which we think about it) to the 'thought concrete' (the reconstituted and now understood whole present in the mind)." ¹² (Ollman 2003, 60, 175) It is to this statement that Ollman attributes his own understanding of the significance that Marx placed on the process of abstraction within his epistemology and overall method.

Ollman suggests that we can understand the process of abstraction and the products of this process as the first and second of Marx's usages of the terms abstraction. While Ollman states that the process of abstraction was at the "core" of Marx's overall epistemology, from Ollman's work we see that for Marx the process of abstraction was at the core of all epistemologies, although for most epistemologies usually this was implicit. (Ollman 2003, 188)

Before looking at Marx's method of abstraction, we look at the method of abstraction that characterizes common sense and bourgeois ideology. Ollman defines common sense as the body of generally unquestioned and obviously true knowledge as well as the equally unquestioned approach to knowledge that is common to the vast majority of scholars and layman in Western capitalist societies. (Ollman 2003, 35) For Ollman in the common sense approach "pieces of our everyday experience are taken as existing separate from their spatial and historical contexts ... [and] given an ontological status independent of the whole." (Ollman 2003, 156) From my own experience I see this in how people think about welfare reform, immigration,

¹² Similarly, Ernest Mandel suggests Marx "starts from elements of the material concrete to go to the theoretical abstract, which helps him then to reproduce the concrete totality in his theoretical analysis." (Marx 1976, 21)

gentrification/urban blight, crime, democracy, etc. As Ollman states, people tend to focus on the evidence that strikes them immediately and directly, what they see, hear or bump into in their immediate surroundings, on appearances. (Ollman 2003, 13) The “common approach is to privilege whatever makes things appear static and independent of one another over their more dynamic and systemic qualities.” (Ollman 2003, 12) In explaining this phenomena Ollman points to both the “fragmentation of existence” and “the partial and one-sided character of socialization under capitalism” that “have inclined people to focus on the particulars that enter their lives – an individual, a job, a place – but to ignore the ways they are related, and thus to miss the patterns – class, class struggle, alienation, and others – that emerge from these relations.” (Ollman 2003, 3) For Ollman the fact that humans lived and worked in an alienated society and the way in which they were socialized to live in such a society were Marx’s third and fourth usages of the term abstraction.

Abstractions in the third sense existed in the world and not in the mind. In these abstractions certain spatial and temporal boundaries and connections stood out, just as others were obscured and invisible, making what was in practice inseparable appear separate and the historically specific features of things disappear behind their more general forms. The objective results of capitalist functioning were labeled “real abstractions” by Marx. It was chiefly these real abstractions that inclined people who had contact with them to develop and employ flawed mental abstractions. It was to these real abstractions that Marx was referring when he said that in capitalist society people were governed by abstractions.

Thus, in part, flawed mental abstractions were nothing more than a “reflection of a real situation” and “the conditions and activities of real people.” As this real situation was itself a segmented, alienated reality, characterized by alienated activity, such mental abstractions, rooted in the segmented appearances of this reality, were

limited in their ability to fully capture the fundamental workings of this reality, to dig beneath these appearances. (Ollman 1971, 230-233)

Thus while part of what determined the way people thought about reality was based in the objective circumstances of their fragmented and alienated existence, the other part that influenced them was based in the partial and one-sided character of socialization they experienced under capitalism, Marx's fourth usage of the term abstraction. Here the term abstraction referred to a sub-order of particularly ill-fitting mental constructs that were too narrow, took in too little, focused too exclusively on appearances, or were otherwise badly composed. Such constructs did not allow for an adequate grasp of their subject matter. They were thus the basic unit of ideology (the inescapable ideational result of living and working in alienated society). While these constructs were sufficient for functioning "appropriately" in society, they were not sufficient for transforming society as was Marx's objective.

Ollman suggests that for Marx bourgeois ideology did not falsify the details, but rather misrepresented them. This it did by "focusing too narrowly on facts which [were] directly observable" and by "abstracting these appearances from the surrounding conditions and results which alone [gave] them their correct meaning, a meaning that often [ran] counter to the obvious one." (Ollman 1971, 228)

For Ollman Marx critiqued bourgeois ideology at this "fundamental [epistemological] level" where its flawed, generally unconscious, process of abstraction produced abstractions that did "not permit the adequate comprehension of their real subject matter." (Ollman 1971, 231) Bourgeois ideology took many forms, but it was always partial, it was always unscientific (limited to appearances), it was always class biased. It always obscured the real history and actual potential of its subject and it always confused – generally turning in an opposite sense – the real relations between its elements. For Marx such bourgeois ideology served capitalist

interests by reproducing the existing conditions of existence. It did this not only when it provided pro-capitalist solutions to pressing social problems (Keynesianism, neo-liberalism, and somewhat “regulated” neo-liberalism today), but also when its conscious efforts to manipulate people’s understanding confused these same people, or made them overly pessimistic and resigned, or made it difficult for them to formulate criticisms or imagine alternative systems. (Ollman 1971, 231)

Walker agrees with Ollman that abstraction was in fact central to Marx’s overall method. (Walker 2001, 46) For him Marx’s concept of abstraction develops in relationship to his critique of empiricism. Marx suggested that empiricism, which focused only on the visible, could not work with an economic system like capitalism, a system “characterized by a mismatch between appearance and essence, [where] the outward appearance and inner essence of things tend not to coincide.” (Walker 2001, 43) Walker suggests this mismatch between essence and appearance was created by inversion, understood by Marx as “a characteristic of capitalism, [as] a systemic phenomenon that [made] appearance diverge from essence.” (Walker 2001, 44) This inversion phenomenon was attributed to the process of capitalist production which “[inverted] subject and object,” making the real subject appear as an object and the real object appear as the subject. (Walker 44-45) Walker points out that for Marx both abstraction and inversion were processes in reality. Whereas inversion was intrinsic to capitalism, so too was abstraction.

Walker asserts that Marx was not suggesting that “the outward appearance [was] in some way a chimera or not real [or part of reality], but it [could] be deceptive.” (Walker 2001, 43) Thus with empiricism, which took things at face value or purely on the basis of their outward appearance, and derived concepts and laws directly from their appearance, its “concepts and laws [would] diverge drastically from the real laws and essential concepts” at work in capitalism. (Walker 2001, 43)

Thus, for Marx, an adequate conception of capitalism required a method that incorporated not only inversion but also abstraction into its approach. Unlike the method of abstraction employed by political economists, who were insufficiently aware of their use of abstractions and thus unquestioning and uncritical, Marx's method of abstraction was very conscious of itself or reflexive.

Indeed, as will be shown, for Ollman it was its process of abstraction that enabled "Marx's epistemology [to be] a way of thinking about the world that [brought] into focus the full range of changes and interactions that [occurred] in the world." (Ollman 2003, 11) This it did by expanding the notion of a thing to include, as aspects of what it was, both the process by which it had become that and the broader interactive context in which it was found. Thus studying something required the study of its history and encompassing system. (Ollman 2003, 11-20) Said another way, things were "defined by their ties to their own preconditions and future possibilities as well as to whatever [was] affecting them and whatever they [were] affecting" at a particular moment. (Ollman 2003, 1-8) As such, it should be clear that Marx included in his abstractions "what much of commonsense would relegate to the external context of these abstractions." (Ollman 2003, 175) Thus Marx restructured his thinking about reality by replacing the commonsense notion of a thing (as something with a history and external connections with other things) with the notion of process (which contained its history and possible future) and relation (which contained as part of what it was its ties with other relations). (Ollman 2003, 11-20) Thus all the units in which Marx thought about and studied capitalism were abstracted as both processes and relations. (Ollman 2003, 11-20)

For Marx, abstraction was the "mental activity by which he [brought] certain qualities in the world into focus and provisionally [excluded] the rest." (Ollman 2003, 188) Depending on the particular purpose at hand, Marx frequently altered the

boundaries of his abstractions to include aspects that were previously omitted or to exclude ones that were there. (Ollman 2003, 188) That is the boundary setting and bringing into focus that lay at the core of Marx's abstraction process were, "of three kinds – extension, level of generality, and vantage point." (Ollman 2003, 189)

However, in discussing Marx's epistemology, Ollman identifies what he calls four interlocking processes or aspects of this one singular process or stage of Marx's method. These were perception, abstraction, conceptualization, and orientation. While these aspects occurred simultaneously Ollman finds it of some use to separate them out from each other, or individuate them. By perception Ollman refers to Marx's understanding of "all the ways in which people [became] aware of the world." (Ollman 2003, 141) As should be clear by now, by abstraction Ollman refers to the process by which Marx understood people to "transform the innumerable qualities [presented] to [their] senses into meaningful particulars." (Ollman 2003, 141)

Moving on, by conceptualization Ollman refers to the process by which Marx named or labeled the units that he had abstracted. Thus for Ollman, contra to how many understand and employ these terms, "the work of separating out a part from an internally related whole is done by the process of abstraction and not ... by conceptualization (though the former is often abstracted as a moment in the latter)." (Ollman 2003, 142) Conceptualization's specific contribution was to give "abstractions a linguistic form" and thus allow them to be "more easily understood and remembered but also communicated." (Ollman 2003, 142-143) The name Marx selected for a particular abstraction inevitably and most often drew upon understandings in the language system to which the name belonged. However, Marx was also able to introduce new concepts such as "surplus value." Ollman refers to Engels who suggested that while others had recognized the existence of the portion of the product that was now called surplus value, it was Marx, given the particular

problems he was addressing, who re-abstracted its main elements and called them surplus value.

Finally, with respect to orientation, what Ollman considers the final aspect of Marx's epistemology, Ollman suggests that Marx drew attention to the dialectical relationship between on the one hand the judgments and understandings, beliefs and attitudes, actions and efforts of specific individuals and groups, and on the other hand, the social context in which these people existed and the real alternatives this social context allowed. Individuals and groups thus had distinctive orientations towards the world that both infused and were informed by their epistemology and its processes of perception, abstraction and conceptualization. (Ollman 2003, 143-144) For Marx orientation both informed learning about the world and was informed by such learning about the world. Knowledge and learning about the world was influenced by the world, interests that flowed from a particular position or vantage point, and the approach employed.

Broad Research Guidelines

Marx's Moment of Inquiry

Marx's moment of inquiry started where his ontology and epistemology left off. Thus, concerned with studying things as interconnected and in motion, in the moment of inquiry Marx attempted to trace out the relations between the units he had already abstracted so as to "uncover the broad contours of their interdependence." (Ollman 2003, 143) In this section we look at Marx's use of dialectical categories and laws, his research guideline to study system before history and the four steps included in what Ollman calls Marx's dance of the dialectic.

In looking at how Marx made sense of the relationship between the part and the whole, the part and other parts of the whole, and the part with other forms of itself,

Ollman refers to Marx's use of such dialectical categories and laws as identity/difference, metamorphosis, quantity/quality change, preconditions/results, and development through contradiction. Such generalizations about "the most common forms of change and interaction that existed on any level of generality" (Ollman 2003, 5?) served Marx "as a broad framework [with] which to look for particular developments." (Ollman 2003, 128) These dialectical laws and categories helped to structure Marx's theories and were indispensable to his account of how capitalism worked, how it developed, and where it was tending. (Ollman 2003, 5) For Ollman it was here that Marx unraveled the "double movement, systemic and historical, of the capitalist mode of production." (Ollman 2003, 118) It is to just such an inquiry into what Ollman calls Marx's concern with the double movement of capitalism, and how he employed dialectical categories in this inquiry, that we now turn.

Accomplishing such an objective required focusing first on system and then on history. While the past happened before the present and was also generally retold in this manner, for Marx investigation actually started with the present. Such a directive, to study system before history, or the present before the past and future, is captured in the four steps of what Ollman calls Marx's dance of the dialectic. In a sense, although Ollman doesn't make this explicit, the first step of this dance of the dialectic (or the method of inquiry) focused on the systemic relations in the present while the second through fourth steps focused on processes occurring across time and thus capitalism's historical aspects (including its future possibilities).

In step one of Marx's dance of the dialectic Marx focused on the present and began his investigation by looking for the "relations between the main capitalist features of our society" at the moment. (Ollman 2003, 161) Here he "[traced] the main lines of the organic interaction that [characterized] capitalist society – particularly as [regarded] the accumulation of capital and the class struggle – at this

moment of time.” (Ollman 2003, 162) Ollman suggests that Marx understood present society as containing overlapping systems or levels of generality. While most did not differentiate between these levels of analysis, and thus ended up with a “confusing patchwork of ill-fitting pieces that [made] the systemic connections that [existed] on any single level very difficult to perceive,” Marx started “with the decision to exclude all noncapitalist levels of generality from his awareness [and] focus provisionally on the capitalist character of the people,” their activities and products. (Ollman 2003, 162) Thus in his investigations of capitalist society he excluded qualities and features having to do with human society, class society, modern capitalist society and the unique society of the here and now.

Ollman asserts that for Marx such features as race, gender, nation and religion were equally real and important for many problems, and had a huge impact on humans who were impacted by all these levels or systems and their respective features. Nevertheless, Ollman states that for Marx it was “mainly material production that [reproduced] the conditions of existence of the totality, and in the mutual interaction between all social factors it [was] mainly economic factors that [exercised] the greatest influence.” As a result, Ollman suggests that Marx began “his study of any problem or period by examining economic conditions and practices, particularly in production. The economic interests of the classes involved [were] also placed front and center, and the contradictions he [took] most care to uncover were economic ones.” (Ollman 2003, 146)

For Ollman, while step one of Marx’s method of inquiry employed dialectics in studying the system in terms of relations, step two employed dialectics with its study of history in terms of processes, but in particular in terms of preconditions and results. Employing the notions of precondition and result, Ollman suggests that the question Marx asked himself, was “what had to happen in the past for the present to

become what it did?” (Ollman 2003, 163) But, there was no teleology here. What Marx was doing here, according to Ollman, was using what he had “uncovered in his reconstruction of the present [to guide] him in his search into the past, helping him decide what to look for as well as how far back to go in looking for it.” (Ollman 2003, 163) Elsewhere Ollman comments that Marx placed such knowledge of the present “at the start of [his] investigation,” thus setting up “criteria for relevance as well as research priorities.” (Ollman 2003, 118) To return briefly to the teleology point, the necessity here was not of a future that had to happen but rather of the “fait accompli,” where necessity was “read backwards into the past” to find the “necessary preconditions” of the already existing present. (Ollman 2003, 119) Such a method of inquiry allowed Marx to “get at the distinctive influence of particular aspects” of an interaction over time and to avoid the “opposing pitfalls” of “shallow eclecticism, where everything [was] equally important ... and causalism, where a major influence [erased] all others while leaving its own progress unaccounted for.” (Ollman 2003, 117-118)

While in his investigations Marx employed the concepts of precondition and result, in his expositions of his findings Marx felt free to employ the concepts of cause and effect. Ollman suggests that where Marx used the formulation “cause” and “effect” (or condition, “determine,” and “produce” in the sense of “cause”), this [was] usually a short hand and first approximation for bringing out for purposes of exposition some special feature in a conclusion whose essential connections [had] been uncovered by studying them as preconditions and results.” (Ollman 2003, 121) Thus Ollman cautions that Marx’s use of the notion of precondition and results should be read dialectically and not causally.

As Ollman states “after reconstructing the organic interaction of the capitalist present and establishing its origins in the past, Marx [was] ready to project the main

tendencies that he [found] there into one or another stage of the future. As part of this third step in his method Marx [re-abstracted (reorganized, re-thought)] these tendencies as “contradictions,” which [emphasized] their interaction as processes that [were] simultaneously mutually supporting and mutually undermining one another. Over time, it [was] the undermining aspects that [prevailed].” (Ollman 2003, 163-164) Whereas in step two these processes were seen as mutually dependent and interacting, now they were seen not just as mutually supporting but also as mutually undermining. As discussed earlier, for Marx, seeing things as an internally related whole, both spatially as well as temporally, allowed him to understand them as in contradiction with each other.¹³ This contrasted with bourgeois ideology which, seeing things as separate or independent and static, could not comprehend the notion of real and existing contradiction.

By way of employing the dialectical category of contradiction Marx was able to see in the present how its cluster of relations had developed, the pressures undermining their existing equilibrium, and the likely changes up ahead. Ollman suggests that Marx projected these contradictions “from the past, through the present, and into the future” where they were resolved. (Ollman 2003, 161) The projections Marx made moved from the immediate future (development over the next few years), to the near future (the coming of the crisis that results in socialist revolution), to a middle or transitional future (a stage between capitalism and communism that has come to be called socialism), and finally to the far future or what he called communism. (Ollman 2003, 161-162) For Marx tracing how capitalist contradictions

¹³ Among the contradictions he frequently studied were that between “use-value and exchange value, between capital and labor in the production process (and between capitalists and workers in the class struggle), between capitalist forces and capitalist relations of production, between competition and cooperation, ... and – perhaps most decisively – between social production and private appropriation.” (Ollman 2003, 164)

unfolded was also a way of discovering the main causes of coming disruptions and coming conflict. (Ollman 2003, 18)

As Ollman states, in Marx's fourth step, Marx "[reversed] himself and [used] the socialist and communist stages of the future at which he had arrived as vantage points for reexamining the present, extended back in time to include its own past, now viewed as the sum of the necessary preconditions for such a future." (Ollman 2003, 161) For Ollman this last step, though little understood, was the "means by which Marx [provided] the 'finishing touches' to his analysis of capitalism." (Ollman 2003, 166) Ollman suggests that "in the same way that our present provides the key for understanding the past, the future (that is, the likely future, in so far as we can determine it) provides the key for understanding the present." Communism provided Marx with "criteria for determining priorities for research and politics, distinguishing between the kind of changes capitalism [could] absorb from those that set transitional forces into motion." (Ollman 2003, 167) "Revisiting the present from the vantage point of its likely future [concretized] and hence [made] visible the potential that [existed] throughout the present for just such a future... Potential [was] the form in which the future [existed] inside the present." (Ollman 2003, 167) This last step of Ollman's dance of dialectic allowed Marx to look at the present from the vantage point of the future and see how the necessity of interconnection and contradiction led to potential within the present which if understood could be marshaled by political strategies. Marx's political strategy was built upon the sense of necessity and potential that he arrived at in these earlier studies.

Marx's moment of intellectual reconstruction/self-clarification

By way of review, for Ollman "Marx's ontology [declared] the world as an internally related whole; his epistemology [broke] down this whole into relational

units whose structured interdependence [was] reflected in the meaning of his concepts; his inquiry, by tracing the links between these units, [filled] in the details of this whole.” For Ollman Marx’s intellectual reconstruction concluded the process of transforming this “featureless because unknown whole” into the “rich concrete totality of his understanding.” (Ollman 2003, 147)

Ollman is novel in his attributing to Marx what he calls a moment of intellectual reconstruction that falls between what Marx himself discusses as the moment of inquiry and the moment of exposition. For Ollman, Marx’s moment of intellectual reconstruction or self-clarification was where Marx put together for himself the results of his research. Ollman here suggests that Marx’s self-clarification was “not quite the same as the analysis found in his published writings.” For Ollman this little studied moment and its products can be seen in the *1844 Manuscripts* [first published in 1931] and the *Grundrisse* [written in 1858 and first published in 1939], neither of which was meant by Marx for publication. (Ollman 2003, 187) According to Ollman, such writings displayed Marx “thinking something through to make sense of it for himself.” (Ollman 2003, 147) For Ollman, that Marx required such writings is easily understood when we take into account the great amount of material through which he sifted.

Following on this Ollman suggests that a lot can be learned from the differences between the published and unpublished Marx. Ollman concludes that “what Marx required (or found helpful) in order to make sense of the world for himself was not quite the same as what he thought others required to make sense of and be convinced by what he had come to understand.” (Ollman 2003, 148)

As already suggested, Marx’s intellectual reconstruction was the moment in which he reconstructed for himself an understanding of the concrete totality or the overall capitalist system. Ollman suggests that the central place in this totality is held

by contradiction. Ollman suggests that it is this focus on contradictions that differentiated Marx and those who followed his method from liberals and radicals.¹⁴

Marx's moment of exposition or presentation

For Ollman, in his moment of exposition Marx used a strategy that took account of how his intended audience thought as well as what they knew to explain his dialectical grasp of the “facts” and convince them of what he was saying. (Ollman 2003, 187) In his presentations Marx’s overarching goal was to have his analysis be not only understood, “but accepted and acted upon.” (Ollman 2003, 148) Such a goal informed every aspect of his presentation. Striving to achieve a “powerful emotional impact on his readers” influenced how Marx “organized his presentation, what he stressed and played down, and the examples, arguments, and even vocabulary he used.” (Ollman 2003, 148) Thus for Ollman, when writing for the public, Marx downplayed the contribution that the theory of alienation, his vision of communism, and the dialectical method made to his own understanding of the world.” (Ollman 2003, 148) Ollman suggests that in Marx’s published works we find a “marriage between what he really understood of the world ... and the strategy of representation he adopted to simplify and clarify his view and to convince others, most of whom knew little political economy and less dialectics, of their truth and importance.” (Ollman 2003, 148) For Ollman Marx understood comprehension and explanation as distinct functions involving different techniques. (Ollman 2003, 150)

In the moment of exposition Marx attempted to present to others the system he had worked out for himself in his intellectual reconstruction. He did this by “tracing

¹⁴ While for Ollman liberals see no connections between most social problems, radicals are able to see various social problems as connected to one another as interrelated aspects of capitalist life. Yet even radicals miss the role of “structures (essences, laws and contradictions) that mediate the particular events and the capitalist system as a whole.” As Ollman continues, “to grasp how capitalism is responsible for a given fact, one must know the interrelated functions that bring the requirements of the system (with the imperative of capital to accumulate at its core) to bear on the people and processes involved.” (Ollman 2003, 150)

the interaction of social relations in the present, and by displaying their historical development as parts of a system through changes in their forms.” (Ollman 2003, 151) In his presentation of both the interaction and development of social relations, contradictions and economic factors occupied privileged positions. Ollman also points our attention to how for Marx “the importance of a relation for the functioning of the capitalist system and not its historical appearance [... determined] the order of exposition.” (Ollman 2003, 151) Thus Marx usually analyzed capital before rent.

Elsewhere Ollman suggests that for Marx explanation had to do with clarifying for his readers the relations both within and between his abstracted units. It had to do with “helping others to discover the ‘hidden substratum’ that [he had] discovered through science.” (Ollman 2003, 130) Ollman discusses how Marx dealt with each subject from many different vantage points and “[followed] each subject out of and into the particular forms it [assumed] at different times and in different contexts.” (Ollman 2003, 131) Here Ollman refers to Marx’s treatment of the metamorphoses of value. Given the complexity of reality, in terms of the interaction and development of numerous relations, Ollman suggests that Marx dealt with problems in stages, employing what Sweezy refers to as a method of “successive approximations.” (Ollman 2003, 131)

Marx’s Technique of Critique

We can start off our discussion of Marx’s technique of critique by using Walker’s summary of Marx’s critical method. For Walker Marx’s technique of critique was immanent, transcendent and practical. Its immanence could be seen in that its starting point was the identified thinker’s work and that from there it identified the contradictions of this work. Its transcendence could be seen in its transcending these contradictions by grasping them by their roots, seeing them in their historical

development and interconnection. It was practical in that it called for the resolution of these contradictions via practical activity. (Walker 2001, 19) It was this focus and understanding that required political activity, not just the theoretical activity of Hegel and the Left Hegelians. As Walker states “Marx [saw] the origins of philosophical problems in material reality, and their resolution as requiring practical activity to transform these material conditions.” (Walker 2001, 19)

In this context we can see the close connection between the critical aspect of Marx’s method and its revolutionary aspect. Marx’s critique was both historical and epistemological. It was through critique that Marx identified possibilities obscured by the prevailing methods and perspectives. The role of critique in Marx’s method comes out more clearly in the next section where we look at the series of critiques that Marx moved through in his development of his method.

Marx’s Method - Historical Investigation

Having looked at Marx’s method from a system standpoint, we are now in the position to look at it from an historical standpoint. We can start such a process with a brief personal biography of Marx which begins by looking at the economic and social climate into which Marx was born, continues through his schooling, the comrades he acquired, their political trajectory in relationship to the emerging social problem, the formation and emergence of new social forces, and the political activity of working class, and finally Marx’s participation in and contribution to that activity. This biographical account of Marx’s early to middle years, drawing from David McLellan’s voluminous writings, is then followed by a discussion of the main intellectual currents Marx drew from and critiqued in developing his method.

Biographical Sketch

Marx was born on May 5, 1818, into a solidly middle class family. While the family had a long line of rabbis on both sides, Marx's father had converted to Protestantism so as to not lose his job as a highly respected lawyer. The town in which he was born, Trier, was located in the Rhineland, at the time dominated by semi-feudal Prussia. Not only was the Rhineland one of the most highly industrialized regions of Germany, but its having been annexed by Napoleon had led it to become one of the regions most influenced by the democratic ideals of the French Revolution.

Having started studying law at the University of Bonn in 1835, in 1836 he moved to the University of Berlin and soon to a study of philosophy. Here the crowd he fell in with were the Left Hegelians. The Left Hegelians engaged in the politics of the day through religious and philosophical criticism; Marx joined them in this religious criticism, itself an implicit criticism of the social and political status quo, and moved toward a more explicit political and social critique. Seeing his Left Hegelian mentors and colleagues denied teaching positions at German universities, Marx's career trajectory became one of journalism. Starting in 1842 he wrote for *Deutsche Jahrbucher* and then *Rheinische Zeitung* (a liberal daily funded by Rhenish Industrialists hoping to promote free trade). Within a short time Marx became the editor of the latter publication and moved by the emerging social problem, he wrote articles "attacking the laws forbidding the collection of lumber by the poor and exposing the misery of the Moselle wine-growers." (McLellan 1971a, 5) In the face of repression for his and others writings, Marx moves to Paris where he joined the staff of the journal *Deutsch-franzosische Jahrbucher*. It was during this time that he continued his studies of Hegel, but also engaged in the study of Rousseau, Montesquieu and Machiavelli, and French social historiography, in particular having to do with the French Revolution.

In his move from Germany to Paris Marx continued his studies of French social history and political theory, began to make contact with Paris' worker's clubs, took up the study of classical English economists, engaged in bristling conversations with the Russian anarchist Bakunin and the French socialist Proudhon, and met his life long intellectual and political partner, Frederick Engels.

Marx's subversive journalism and organizational activity led to an itinerant life that took him from Paris to London and then Brussels and then back to Paris before heading off to Cologne and then Paris again before his more or less final move to London in 1849. During this time, Marx's experience with the League of the Just and then the Communist League convinced him of the "need to introduce a minimum of theoretical unity into the nascent communist movement" (McLellan 1975, 14) Such an inclination was most prominently captured in his drafting of the Manifesto, in 1848.

With the 1848 revolutions of France and Germany, in particular the combined militancy of the working class and failure of the German bourgeoisie to win the democratic revolution in Germany, Marx, who had by this time critiqued utopian socialism and revolutionary adventurism, came to his firm conviction about the revolutionary and historic role of the working class. However, as no new round of revolution burst forth, and with his economic studies begun in earnest, McLellan suggests that Marx soon concluded that a new round of revolutionary activity would only be possible with a new crisis. (McLellan 1975, 17)

Marx's Engagement with the Intellectual Currents of His Day

Walker helps us with a three phase periodization of the development in Marx's method which takes shape through its relationship to and critique of the prevailing intellectual currents of his day, as expressed by their prominent exemplars. In the

early writings, which included – *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (1843), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844), and *Holy Family* (1845) – “Marx [was] in the process of formulating his approach and method, and of doing the philosophical groundwork which [underlay] his later writings.” (Walker 2001, 8) For Walker it is in the early works that Marx was developing what would become his mature scientific method. In Marx’s transitional works, which included – *Thesis on Feuerbach* (1845), *German Ideology* (1846) and *Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) – Walker sees Marx first formulating the materialist conception of history and departing from the strong Hegelian and Feuerbachian influences of his early writings. Yet according to Walker these works “still have a substantial philosophical content.” He continues “they still involve Marx looking over his shoulder at his philosophical roots, and ‘settling accounts’ with speculative philosophy.” (Walker 2001, 29) Additionally, Walker continues, “they do not have the economic focus of the mature works from the *Grundrisse* (1857) onwards.” (Walker 2001, 29) It is this continuity in Marx’s methodological work, including both development and departure, that Walker employs to justify the transitional stage of his somewhat unconventional three stage periodization of Marx’s literary work. According to Walker, “in the mature works Marx [shifted] his attention to political economy.” (Walker 2001, 40) However, while the thematic focus shifted, the method employed largely remained consistent (with some new developments) with that developed over the previous stages of his work. Amongst Marx’s literary works during this period were – *Grundrisse* (1857), *Contribution to Critique of Political Economy* including *Preface* (1859), *Theories of Surplus Value* (1863), *Capital I* (1867), *Capital II* (published posthumously by Engels 1885) and *Capital III* (published posthumously by Engels 1894).

For Walker Marx’s methodological critique of Hegel (*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, *Holy Family* and *Economic and*

Philosophical Manuscripts) centered on Hegel's inversion of the relationship between subject and predicate, where the Idea is made the subject and empirical reality the predicate.¹⁵ (Walker 2001, 9) For Marx, in Hegel's abstract idealism the ideal and abstract were the starting point and the concrete was thus reduced to mere forms of existence or semblances of the abstract. In this way Hegel's idealism denied the significance of concrete distinctions and the particular. Additionally, with empirical reality denied any nature of its own, the real relations and development of this concrete reality were mystified and obscured. With concrete reality seen as an expression or manifestation of the ideal it was put beyond criticism. With no resolutions for the contradictions and imperfections in reality, Hegel's philosophy was non-practical. Additionally, Hegel's inversion of subject and predicate made thought the active subject, the primary activity. To Marx Hegel's abstract idealism, through its dualistic, obscuring, mystifying, uncritical and non-practical method reinforced existing social reality, left the world unchanged, and thus did not realize philosophy's promise.

While many of the elements of Marx's method emerged from rigorous critiques, in his adoption of dialectics we see Marx creatively appropriated an aspect of Hegel's method through excising it from Hegel's idealism. With respect to Hegel's idealism, Walker suggests that just as the concept of Spirit occupied a central place in Hegel's philosophy, and just as dialectics was at the heart of the Spirit's self-realization and development, at the heart of Hegel's conception of dialectics were the three features change, connection and contradiction. For Hegel these three features were simultaneously fundamental intrinsic premises in the understanding of reality, the "starting point and focus of our understanding of the world." (Walker 2001, 79)

¹⁵ According to Walker, for Marx, not only was this an inversion, but its separation of the material and ideal, by separating subject and predicate, was an unnecessary dualism.

Hegel's method aimed to "capture in thought" the change, contradiction and connection found in everything. (Walker 2001, 80) As such, Hegel believed that thought, in order to comprehend the world, had to be dialectical. He thus criticized false abstractions that viewed reality as static, harmonious and segmented as opposed to in motion based on internal contradictions and interconnections.

According to Walker, Marx's view of Hegel's dialectic developed over time from critical analysis in the early writings, to stronger criticism in the transitional writings, to a more explicitly favorable view of the dialectical approach in the mature works. This involved extricating Hegel's dialectical method from his overall idealist philosophical system. Whereas for Hegel the Spirit was the fundamental essence of reality, the creative subject, reality being just an expression of the Spirit, for Marx human beings were the creative subjects, and it was their practice or productive activity that was the fundamental foundation of social reality and spur to historical development. Rather than creating material reality, ideas needed to be "derived from and explained by material reality." (Walker 2001, 84)

While Marx left behind Hegel's idealism or conception of the Spirit he retained the centrality of dialectics, and within dialectics, the centrality of change, connection and contradiction. While for Hegel dialectics was the way in which the spirit developed, for Marx dialectics was the way that material reality developed. Thus Marx eliminated the ideal from his appropriation of Hegel's dialectics.

Turning to Marx's methodological critique of the Left Hegelians (*Holy Family* and *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*), Walker suggests that while Marx was attracted by their emphasis on criticism he ultimately became dissatisfied with their insufficiently fundamental and deep critique of Hegel's thought, which Marx saw as "intrinsically uncritical and non-radical." (Walker 2001, 13) Marx was thus forced to criticize them too. For Marx they remained idealists remaining in Hegel's idealist,

speculative paradigm and thus could not offer a radical and true critique of society. Marx pointed out how in their critique of religion they did not offer a material critique that got into why religions arose or what their roots were in the material world. In this they failed to go to the root of the matter. Additionally, by transforming the real and concrete into ideal and abstract the Left Hegelians like Hegel denied the importance of practice, practical activity. Finally, Marx was also critical of the Left Hegelians for their emphasis on rational criticism. For the Left Hegelians it was sufficient to apply rational criticism at a philosophical level to any and every issue and area without requiring knowledge of the subject to any great degree. Contra the Left Hegelians Marx argued for an empirical criticism and argued for the empirical nature of his studies.¹⁶ Walker is quick to add however that in this Marx was not arguing for empiricism by a long shot. In summary, Marx was critical of the Left Hegelians for their having too shallow a critique of Hegel and by implication their remaining in the camp of idealist philosophy. As with Hegel, their lack of a material critique led to an uncritical philosophizing. As with Hegel, their abstract idealism led to a non-practical philosophizing. Finally they adhered to rational criticism as opposed to empirical criticism.

In Marx's transitional works Walker sees Marx clarifying what had been in the early works a rather ambiguous and under-developed materialism. In this process he establishes the materialist aspect of his ontology, his materialist conception of history, and his initial understanding of abstraction as a critical component of epistemology. In his *Thesis on Feuerbach* and *German Ideology* Marx further developed his materialism as practical, critical and empirical. Marx was developing his philosophical

¹⁶ Walker also comments on how Marx was influenced by Feuerbach in his movement away from Left Hegelians. While the Left Hegelians remained inside the old idealist philosophy, Feuerbach stepped outside it and Marx followed him in the pursuit of a truly critical attitude towards the world that neither Hegel nor the Left Hegelians could provide.

materialism in polemic with not just idealism, but also with the old forms of materialism as represented by Feuerbach and others whom he critiqued for their inattention to practice or human activity. To Marx the old materialism “[viewed] reality in passive terms, as consisting of objects separate from us, which we observe and contemplate (but do not influence).” It viewed activity in theoretical terms, as “essentially restricted to thought” and thus the realm of idealism. Thus for the old materialism “the material and ideal [were] separated as passive object and active subject” (Walker 2001, 29) with the subject’s activity limited to theory and consciousness. While Marx hinted at his rejection of this old materialism in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, it is in *Theses on Feuerbach* that Marx’s materialism emphatically denied this independence and asserted the importance of practical human activity (or practice) in reality. Said another way, for Walker Marx rejected both idealism and passive, abstract materialism, and overcame the old dichotomies between ideal and material and subject and object, through praxis, or making practice (unified with theory), central.

Marx’s philosophical materialism as established in *Theses on Feuerbach* set the philosophical foundation for his materialist conception of history (what others have called his historical materialism) as outlined in *German Ideology*. Now practice, which had been central to philosophical materialism, was discussed in more concrete terms as production. For the materialist conception of history material production became the “starting point for historical study.” (Walker 2001, 30) Walker continues that it was the process of production which was “the key to understanding societies; it [was] the basis on which the form of economic intercourse, civil society, religion, philosophy – in short all society – [arose].” (Walker 2001, 31)

Finally, in his polemic with Feuerbach Marx began to develop his understanding of the method of abstraction. Walker suggests that Marx was critical of

Feuerbach's abstract materialism which proceeded from a conception of 'man' that was abstract. Marx, who we've already established was critical of Feuerbach's passive and contemplative attitude, was also critical of Feuerbach's "abstractness in making 'Man' his subject rather than 'real historical man', i.e., human beings in specific social relations." Additionally, for Marx, such human beings were to be understood as engaged in practical activity, social production, something, which as previously discussed, Feuerbach's old materialism failed to do. (Walker 2001, 35)

Ernest Mandel suggests that it was early 19th century French historiography that created "the concepts social classes and conflicts between social classes, that is, class struggle as instruments for the understanding of history." (Mandel 1994, 18) While others have focused on the role of material conditions in determining history in the last analysis, the French historiographers focused on social and economic conditions. The French historiographers systematically employed the concept of class and class struggle in their studies of the English and French Revolutions. Mandel suggests that Marx and Engels integrated this insight and were, "therefore as much heirs of French sociological historiography as they were of German classical philosophy." (Mandel 1994, 19)

Walker's begins his review of Marx's critique of the political economists (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*), by noting the similarity between Marx's methodological criticisms of Hegel on the one hand and the political economists on the other. Walker notes that Marx employed an immanent critique (a critique from within) by using the texts of his subjects (Hegel and the political economists) as his starting point. Through a critique of the writers Marx made a critique of society. As already suggested with Hegel, Marx found the political economists to be similarly intrinsically uncritical. "Their accounts [did] not provide 'real', adequate explanations, i.e.; they [did] not describe the origins and necessity of the phenomena

under scrutiny.” (Walker 2001, 15) While Marx accepted and used as his starting point the basic account of the political economists, he drew attention to the internal contradictions of these accounts. Failing to understand the economy as an interconnected totality, they saw necessary developments (the inevitability of monopoly, overproduction and the immiseration of the worker) as accidental circumstances. (Walker 2001, 16) Failing to take a historical approach they “[absolutized] private property and the system based on it.” (Walker 2001, 16) In short, in their adopting the “viewpoint of private property/alienated labor” they mystified the situation and “[concealed] the true nature of the economic reality.” (Walker 2001, 16)

Conclusion

Our discussion of Marx’s method and in particular his method of abstraction, suggests that we define a thing in terms of its systemic and historical relations. While the last section of this chapter has focused on Marx’s method from an historical vantage point and in particular that which gave rise to his method, the rest of this thesis continues the historical investigation of Marx’s method in terms of what it has become. Here I abstract what those who followed Marx did with Marx’s method as part of Marx’s method. As discussed much of this was problematic both in terms of its intellectual loyalty to Marx’s project and its ultimate undermining of the method and perspective as a whole. But there were those who intrigued by Marx’s method studied it closely, captured it methodologically, and both contributed certain innovations and used it to inform their practice and thus our own. It is to one such later Marxist, Gramsci, that this thesis now turns.

CHAPTER 3

ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to look at how Gramsci re-appropriates Marx's method or his critical thought as a means to (or what would be his first step in) his rejuvenating the Marxist perspective as a whole (with respect to this latter piece I'll mainly deal with Gramsci's political theory).

Before going on I'll actually make a distinction between the larger project that Gramsci suggested, a systematic treatment of the philosophy of praxis that would contribute to its autonomous development, and the more restricted project that Gramsci actually achieved during his lifetime, what could be called his (own version of a) reconstructed Marxism. For the larger project I'll draw largely from Gramsci's prison writings, and in particular an essay entitled "Problems of Marxism." For the more restricted project I'll draw largely from Gramsci's pre-prison and prison writings, as well as the interpretive assistance of Esteve Morera.

In many ways a valid interpretation of how Gramsci defined the larger project of reconstructing Marxism is a fairly contained exercise. It can be sufficiently assembled based on a close read of Gramsci's essay "Problems of Marxism." (Gramsci 1971, 378-473) The task of interpreting what was Gramsci's reconstruction of Marxism is a more involved project. For the latter we thus turn to the interpretive work of Morera. What we find is not the reconstruction of Marxism that Gramsci laid out in his essay "Problems of Marxism," but what he was able to do to contribute to such a project and wield during his political and intellectual career.

This chapter starts with Gramsci's discussion of the larger project, written in prison, in part because it provides a useful frame with which to analyze Gramsci's own reconstructed Marxism and how he got to it. Methodologically, in some ways this parallels Ollman's insight, which he attributes to Marx, of starting with system and then doing history, or starting with the present and then looking to its necessary prerequisites. This chapter then turns to a discussion of Gramsci's political theory, what many consider to be his major contribution to Marxism. The chapter concludes by exploring the question of what we can take away or learn from Gramsci in terms of the project of reconstructing Marxism.

Gramsci's Envisioned Project Of Reconstructing Marxism

Setting up the Project

In addressing the question of how Gramsci reappropriated Marx's method so as to reconstruct the Marxist perspective as a whole, we can first turn directly to Gramsci's own reflexive comments on the topic. Here we see that Gramsci discussed the tasks of Marxism, the obstacles in its way of achieving these tasks, and what had to be done to remove these obstacles and reconstruct Marxism so that it could play its historic role.

With respect to Marxism's tasks, Gramsci spoke of two. Its first task was to "constitute its own group of independent intellectuals." (Gramsci 1971, 392) These were the "organic intellectuals" so associated with Gramsci's political theory. Its second task was to "educate the popular masses." (Gramsci 1971, 392) Elsewhere Gramsci referred to the latter task as "[establishing] the 'cathartic' moment." (Gramsci 1971, 367) By this Gramsci had in mind the "passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political moment" when "structure ceases to be an external force which crushes man, assimilates him to itself and makes him passive;

and is transformed into a means of freedom, an instrument to create a new ethico-political form and a source of new initiatives.” (Gramsci 1971, 367) For Gramsci, while the second task was fundamental, the establishment of a core of intellectuals was a prerequisite. To Gramsci, while the first task would require confronting and “[combating] modern ideologies in their most refined form,” elsewhere referred to by Gramsci as “high culture,” (Gramsci 1971, 394) the task of educating the masses would involve tackling what he saw as a their “medieval” culture, elsewhere referred to as “popular culture.” (Gramsci 1971, 393)

To Gramsci, the main obstacle to Marxism’s achieving these tasks had to do with the prevailing revisionist forms in which it existed, both idealist and materialist, neither of which was equipped to accomplish its tasks. Gramsci, referencing Labriola’s work in this area, (Gramsci 1971, 388) spoke of a dual revisionism that at its core involved wedding Marxism with either idealism or materialism. Gramsci was quick to point out that whether or not those involved were explicit about either absorbing *Marxism into* another philosophical current or absorbing *into Marxism* another philosophical current was irrelevant to his charge of revisionism. (Gramsci 1971, 389) Gramsci’s assessment of these revisionist currents included a discussion of who was a part of each, why they had revised Marxism in the way that they did, how this led to its inadequacy to the tasks of Marxism and the political implications of this inadequacy.

One form of revisionism was carried out by those in idealist intellectual currents external to Marxism who borrowed certain elements from it and thus reduced Marxism to these elements. They tended to be what Gramsci called “pure intellectuals” such as Croce, Gentile, Sorel and Bergson. Gramsci suggested that for them Marxism offered a means to strengthen their conceptions and moderate the excesses of their speculative philosophy. It thus provided “new arms for the arsenal of

the social group with which they were linked.” (Gramsci 1971, 390) Gramsci singled out Croce in particular who reduced Marxism to “an empirical cannon of historical research.” (Gramsci 1971, 391)

The other form of revisionism was carried out by those who called themselves Marxists and had inherited the Second International’s absorption of traditional materialism.¹⁷ Gramsci suggested that compared with the pure intellectuals of the first revisionism, those who comprised this revisionism were more dedicated and closely linked to the masses. He added however that their connection was extrinsic and not organic. Gramsci offered two possible explanations for the alliance of Marxism with traditional materialism. In part these Marxists were looking for a more comprehensive philosophy than “[the] ‘simple’ interpretation of history” (Gramsci 1971, 389) they understood Marxism to be. Additionally, Gramsci suggested that their close relationship to the masses focused their attention on “the need to combat the residues of the pre-capitalist world that still [existed] among the popular masses, especially in the field of religion.” (Gramsci 1971, 392)

While for Gramsci the first form of revisionism may have confused people as to what Marxism really was, the second form of revisionism, what amounted to an “economistic superstition,” detracted from Marxism’s “capacity for cultural expansion among the top layer of intellectuals, however much it may [have gained] among the popular masses and the second-rate intellectuals, who [did] not intend to overtax their brains but still [wished] to appear to know everything, etc.” (Gramsci 1971, 164)

For Gramsci this second form of revisionism, an ultra-materialist Marxism, signified a regress for Marxism from what had been Marx’s transcendence of both idealism and materialism in a synthesis that arrived at the dialectical unity of the

¹⁷ While Gramsci acknowledged that there were some academic Marxists who absorbed the idealist philosophy of Kant, they seem to have had a minimal impact reaching only a restricted intellectual group.

material and ideal. (Gramsci 1971, 396) More will be said on this shortly. For Gramsci, the absorbed traditional materialism of this revisionist Marxism underpinned the economic determinism of the revolutionary movement's right and left wings both in Italy and abroad. For the right wing of the working class movement the evolution of capitalism to socialism required only a fight for reforms through trade unions and the electoral parliamentary arena. For the left wing of the working class movement the assumed inevitability of crisis and revolution would determine the nature of historical change and consciousness of this change. This justified the left's intransigent sectarian revolutionism. As a result of this methodological underpinning and its ensuing political theory and practice the post World War I revolutionary tide that struck Italy came and went before the communists were in any position to do anything about it. In short for Gramsci they had not appreciated their role and thus not prepared for the moment of opportunity.

To address this situation Gramsci called for a return to the perspective's real "orthodoxy" or origins, a rigorous study of Marx's work, and on the basis of such a study a contribution to Marxism's further development that would consist of its consolidation, dissemination and application.

In a sense Gramsci's project with respect to Marxism was to confront the systematic revision that Marxism had been subjected to, by which it had either been absorbed by or itself absorbed other philosophical currents, with his own efforts at and recommendations for a systematic treatment of Marxism that would contribute to its autonomous development. In these efforts he acknowledged the groundbreaking interpretive work of one of his predecessors, the Italian Marxist Antonio Labriola. (Gramsci 1971, 397-398) David McLellan views Labriola as "probably the best interpreter of Marx in any country during the years immediately following Engels' death." McLellan suggests that Labriola "opposed materialistic interpretations of

Marxism and ... made an anti-positivist and historicist Marxism welcome in Italy.”
(McLellan 1979, 20-21)

Gramsci suggested that “the systematic treatment of Marxism [could] not afford to neglect any of the constituent parts of the doctrines of its founder [Marx].” (Gramsci 1971, 431) For Gramsci, philosophy, politics and economics were the “necessary constituent elements” of Marxism. (Gramsci 1971, 403) Yet these were not parts that functioned or could be understood on their own. They were part of an integral whole.

In particular there was no such thing as a free standing systematic philosophy or philosophy proper within Marxism. Gramsci suggested that such a philosophy, “separated from the theory of history and politics” would be metaphysical. By metaphysical Gramsci referred to not just speculative idealism, but “any systematic formulation that [was] put forward as an extra-historical truth, as an abstract universal outside of time and space.” (Gramsci 1971, 437) By contrast it was the great accomplishment of Marxism, despite Bukharin’s *Popular Manual*’s separation of philosophy from political theory, that it historicized philosophy, identifying it with history and politics. (Gramsci 1971, 436) Gramsci suggested that the “whole way of conceiving philosophy [had] been ‘historicized,’ that is to say a new way of philosophizing which [was] more concrete and historical than what went before it [had] begun to come into existence.” (Gramsci 1971, 448) For Gramsci Marx’s philosophy was in essence a general methodology of history. (Gramsci 1971, 428)

Additionally, Gramsci suggested a “systematic treatment” would have to deal with the “general philosophical part” before it “[developed] in a coherent fashion all the general concepts of a methodology of history and politics and, in addition, of art, economics and ethics, ...” (Gramsci 1971, 431) Gramsci here suggested the need to focus on the general methodology before going on to develop the theory (or in essence

methodology) of the other elements. This is a major aspect of my thesis – the distinction and order of reconstruction. It is also a point that Ollman clarifies as lying at the heart of the reconstruction of Marxism.

Conducting the Project

For Gramsci the reconstruction consisted of studying Marx's work, consolidating the findings into a systematic method or science, disseminating the study of Marxism, and in particular its method, and employing the method in the development of political theory, analyses and plans of action.

Gramsci's thoughts on how to study Marxism, which he attributed largely to Labriola, were themselves actually a polemic against the vulgar Marxists, which for Gramsci included the Russian Marxist Plekhanov. Gramsci seemed to have implied that Plekhanov's approach limited the study of Marxism to the study of its sources and in so doing reduced Marxism to its sources. (Gramsci 1971, 387, 464) In Plekhanov's work Marxism thus "[relapsed] into vulgar materialism." (Gramsci 1971, 387) For Gramsci Plekhanov's study of the origins of Marxism, the "generic search for historical sources,"¹⁸ obscured the absence in his work of a classification of Marxism that was "drawn from the heart of the doctrine itself." (Gramsci 1971, 431)

In critique of Plekhanov Gramsci suggested that while the "study of the philosophical culture of a man like Marx [was] not only interesting but necessary," it was important to remember that such a study belonged "exclusively to the field of reconstruction of his intellectual biography." (Gramsci 1971, 464) While the study of the origins of Marx's thought was certainly necessary, such a study had to be seen as a premise for a far more important study, that of Marx's own original philosophy. Indeed, Gramsci believed that it was important to "reconstruct the process of

¹⁸ This is very similar to Ollman's suggestion of studying Marxism as system before history.

intellectual development” so as to “identify those elements which were to become stable and ‘permanent’ – in other words those which were taken up as the thinker’s own thought, distinct from and superior to the ‘material’ which he had studied earlier and which served as a stimulus to him.” (Gramsci 1971, 383) In essence, Gramsci differentiated between the elements that motivated Marx’s philosophical activity, the elements that he incorporated into his thought, and the elements of his thought that were new creation. (Gramsci 1971, 464-465)

Looking at Marx’s works from the stand point of his “intellectual formation, maturity, possession and application of the new way of thinking and of conceiving life and the world,” Gramsci argued that it was important to “search for the Leitmotiv, for the rhythm of the thought as it [developed],” and not be satisfied with “isolated aphorisms.” (Gramsci 1971, 383-384)

Such a criterion of research was necessary given, as discussed in the previous chapter, what Gramsci saw as the state in which Marx left his work. The founder had never “systematically expounded” his conception of the world. (Gramsci 1971, 382) For Gramsci, Marxism “was born in the form of aphorisms and practical criteria for the purely accidental reason that its founder dedicated his intellectual forces to other problems, particularly economic (which he treated in systematic form).” (Gramsci 1971, 426) Gramsci followed up on this statement with the comment that “in these practical criteria and these aphorisms [was] implicit an entire conception of the world, a philosophy.”(Gramsci 1971, 426) Elsewhere Gramsci suggested that “the elements of this new mode of conceiving philosophy [were] contained in aphorisms or in some way dispersed through the writings of the founder of the philosophy of praxis, and that it [was] necessary precisely to distinguish these elements and develop them coherently.” (Gramsci 1971, 464) Given the vastness of Marx’s work, Gramsci cautioned that such a task required “the most scrupulous accuracy, scientific honesty

and intellectual loyalty and [to be conducted] without any preconceptions ...”

(Gramsci 1971, 382)

The effort at reconstructing the author’s biography had to include not just “his practical activity, but also and above all his intellectual activity.” (Gramsci 1971, 383) Here Gramsci counseled that it was important to make the distinction between works Marx published himself and works that were published by others but not without their own “active intervention.” (Gramsci 1971, 384) Elsewhere Gramsci suggested that it was a “criterion of historical judgment” to look to an individual’s “one dominant and predominant activity” for information as to his thought, which more often than not was “implicit and at times even in contradiction with what [was] professedly expressed.” (Gramsci 1971, 403) While Gramsci does not state here what he thought to be Marx’s predominant activity, his comments can be interpreted to suggest that we not accept the few explicit remarks Marx gives us on his method as the final word on what was actually his method.

According to Gramsci, the frequently cited (by both himself and many Marxists) passage from Marx’s *Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* was the “most authentic source for a reconstruction of the philosophy of praxis.” (Gramsci 1971, 460) Hoare and Smith suggest that “since Gramsci had access to few Marxist texts while in prison, this quotation from Marx [*Preface*], here retranslated from the Italian version, came to assume exceptional importance for him.” (Gramsci 1971, 459) Hoare and Smith go on to suggest that Gramsci felt that since Marx didn’t write much about philosophy it was left to Engels to fill in the gaps in Marx’s philosophy. For Hoare and Smith, the fact that Gramsci “either could not or did not know certain works of Marx whose importance has emerged subsequently” explains the emphasis he placed on the unique importance of the *Preface*. Hoare and

Smith assert that this information helps us understand the *Preface* as a “source for Gramsci’s own Marxism and as a guideline for other Marxists.” (Gramsci 1971, 460)

It was from the *Preface* that Gramsci derived what he considered to be two of Marx’s main principles. First, “that no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop.” And second, “that no society breaks down and can be replaced until it has first developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations.” (Gramsci 1971, 177) Gramsci suggested that these principles would assist with correctly analyzing the relationship between structure and superstructure and the forces “active in the history of a particular period,” elsewhere referred to by him as a situation. (Gramsci 1971, 175-177) The principles had led Gramsci to further principles of his historical methodology, in particular those having to do with the relationship between organic movement and conjunctural movement. (Gramsci 1971, 177)

However, while Gramsci walked away from the *Preface*, and other of Marx’s writings, with the basis of a “body of practical rules for research,” (Gramsci 1971, 175) other Marxists had interpreted the *Preface*, and Marxism in general, differently. While “ideologism,” or voluntarists, had over-emphasized the relative influence of the conjunctural and superstructural elements in the study of situations, economism had over-emphasized the relative weight of the organic and structural elements of the situation. In Gramsci’s day it was economism that was a more pressing threat. According to Gramsci, it had made “what [was] a principle of research and interpretation into an ‘historical cause’.” (Gramsci 1971, 180) It had suggested that “every fluctuation of politics and ideology [could] be presented and expounded as an immediate expression of the structure.” (Gramsci 1971, 407)

Thus in addition to the *Preface*, Gramsci suggested that to understand Marxism it was essential to study Marx's concrete historical and political writings (*The 18th Brumaire*, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany*, *The Civil War in France*) and find in these the research guidelines that emerged. Analyzing these texts would allow "one to establish better the Marxist historical methodology, integrating, illuminating and interpreting the theoretical affirmations scattered throughout his works." (Gramsci 1971, 407) Studying these texts would enable one to see the "real precautions introduced by Marx into his concrete researches, precautions which could have no place in his general works." (Gramsci 1971, 407-408)

Gramsci actually said very little about consolidating Marxism, yet it is clear that for him it was essential. While interested in consolidating Marxism's scattered aphorisms into a systematic method or science, Gramsci suggested that Marxism was "still at the stage of discussion, polemic and elaboration." (Gramsci 1971, 433) Thus he cautioned against efforts, like the *Popular Manual*, to "manualize" it before it reached its "classical" phase of development. (Gramsci 1971, 434) The effect would be, despite the literary presentation, a "mechanical juxtaposition of disparate elements which remain inexorably disconnected and disjointed." (Gramsci 1971, 434) Marxism's "necessary inherent coherence" would need be discerned before such efforts to "systematize Marxism" could be effective. (Gramsci 1971, 434)

Gramsci spoke to this search for Marxism's "essential coherence" in various ways. (Gramsci 1971, 382) At times he referred to what he calls Marxism's new synthesis that was captured by the new concept or conception of "immanence" translated from its speculative form in German philosophy into a "historicist form with the aid of French politics and English classical economics." (Gramsci 1971, 400) Such discussions of immanence were usually linked closely with his discussions of historical necessity. At other times Gramsci referred to the dialectic, meaning

Marxism's doctrine of knowledge, as the very marrow of its historiography and science of politics. (Gramsci 1971, 435) In such discussions he suggested that the philosophy of praxis "goes beyond both traditional idealism and traditional materialism ... while retaining their vital elements." Here the dialectic is the means through which the "transcending of old philosophies is effected and expressed" and the new integral and original philosophy is established. (Gramsci 1971, 435)

A further discussion of what Gramsci considered Marx's core synthesis or insight and Marx's ensuing criteria, principles, aphorisms, guidelines and precautions will follow in the next section. For now I'll remain satisfied with a restatement of Gramsci's directive that since "the elements of this new mode of conceiving philosophy [were] contained in aphorisms or in some way dispersed through the writings of the founder of the philosophy of praxis" it would be "necessary precisely to distinguish these elements and develop them coherently." (Gramsci 1971, 464)

For Gramsci the effort to systematize Marxism or offer a systematic treatment of it would be advanced by works that "treated each of Marxism's essential problems in a monograph form." (Gramsci 1971, 434) To this end Gramsci called for a "repertory of the philosophy of praxis." Such a "specialized, encyclopedic work"¹⁹ would consist of a "critical inventory of questions raised and discussed in relation to the philosophy of praxis," "a systematic exposition of practical canons of research and interpretation of history – and politics," "a critique of a number of tendencies within the philosophy of praxis," and related "critical bibliographies." (Gramsci 1971, 414 – 415) Such a work would be of use for the "dissemination of the study of philosophy of praxis," and for our specific interest at the moment, "its consolidation into a scientific discipline." (Gramsci 1971, 414) Gramsci also acknowledged that the

¹⁹ The European Marxist dictionary project, with which the journal *Historical Materialism* is involved, can be seen as just such an systematizing effort. (Thomas 2005, 235-239)

material for such a work would be “so extensive, so disparate, so varied in quality and in so many languages that only an editorial committee would be able to prepare it within a reasonable length of time.” (Gramsci 1971, 414)

While as suggested above, the encyclopedia would play a role in disseminating the study of Marxism, Gramsci was not opposed to a manual that would have as its audience the popular masses. However, as already indicated, he had many issues with the Bukharin’s attempt at such a manual.

Gramsci suggested that the starting point for teaching Marxism should be a “critical analysis of the philosophy of common sense ... the conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed.” For Gramsci such common sense was “not a single unique conception,” but rather took “countless forms,” was “fragmentary” and “incoherent.” (Gramsci 1971, 419) It was a “chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions,” “an ambiguous, contradictory and multiform concept.” (Gramsci 1971, 422-423) Additionally, common sense was “crudely neophobe and conservative.” Yet it was common sense, “the spontaneous philosophy of the multitude” that had to be made “ideologically coherent.” (Gramsci 1971, 423)

By contrast, Gramsci asserted that Bukharin’s *Popular Manual* implicitly suggested that the starting point should be the “great systems of traditional philosophy and the religion of the leaders of the clergy – i.e. the conception of the world of the intellectuals and high culture.” (Gramsci 1971, 419) This made no sense to Gramsci who suggested that such systems were both unknown to and had no direct influence on the thinking or activity of the masses. The influence of such systematic philosophies was indirect as they assisted the ruling classes in their own coherence and assertion of hegemony over the masses who were without the “positive effect of a vital ferment of interior transformation” of their own thinking. (Gramsci 1971, 420)

Gramsci suggested that despite the *Popular Manual's* flawed approach of starting a manual for popular consumption with a critique of systematic philosophies as opposed to a critique of common sense, the critique of systematic philosophies was an important element of an individual's more advanced development as well as an important element of consolidating a core of independent intellectuals. Speaking of philosophy in general, Gramsci suggested that in "helping [a student] to elaborate his own thought critically so as to be able to participate in an ideological and cultural community" it was necessary to start with what he already knew, his philosophical experience, which practically almost always meant demonstrating that he was a philosopher without knowing it, studying common sense, religion and finally moving on to "the philosophical systems elaborated by traditional intellectual groups." (Gramsci 1971, 425)

The final aspect of Gramsci's envisioned reconstruction of Marxism was the application of its general methodology to political theory and the other realms of human inquiry. As already cited, "the systematic treatment of Marxism" would have to deal with the "general philosophical part," understood as a general historical methodology, before it "[developed] in a coherent fashion all the general concepts of a methodology of history and politics and, in addition, of art, economics and ethics, ..." (Gramsci 1971, 431)

While Gramsci largely took for granted Marx's work on political economy, he devoted most of his time to the development of a theory of history and politics. In many ways Gramsci's actual project of reconstructing Marxism, to which we now turn, was about contributing to systematizing Marx's science and applying the lessons of Lenin's political theory, developed with Russia in mind, to his own Italy.

Gramsci's Actual Reconstruction Of Marxism

While Gramsci did not articulate the need for what we can term the reconstruction of Marxism until his prison writings, in large part upon reflection on the failed proletarian revolution and victory of fascism, the basis of his own version of a reconstructed Marxism existed from early on in his political career. Thus before turning to a systematic exploration of his own reconstruction of Marxism, as found mainly in his *Prison Notebooks*, and in particular his reappropriation of Marx's method and his development of Marxist political theory, I'll explore the various environmental factors that contributed to it. Included here will be reference to his biography (political and intellectual), his own early political essays and his later reflexive comments.

We can use Gramsci's envisioned project to help us in understanding his actual project. In particular we can employ research guidelines he offered for the study of someone like Marx in our study of him. It will be remembered Gramsci counseled that the central task was to identify the leitmotiv of the author's work, which could be found in a scattered form across the entirety of his life's work, in particular his dominant activity. Biography, and in particular intellectual biography, was essential but only in the context of assisting with identifying this core aspect of the author's work.

Gramsci's Environment/Biography

In turning our attention to Gramsci's biography we can employ several lines from Gramsci himself to orient our work. Gramsci suggested:

“Here one should bear in mind the psychology of the young scholar who every so often allows himself to be intellectually attracted by whatever new current he is studying and examining and who forms *his own individuality* as a result of this very process – *a critical spirit and a*

power of original thought being generated as a result of having tried out and compared with each other so many contrasting ideas. For this one must therefore locate which elements he has incorporated and made homogenous with his own thought and especially what is new creation.” (Gramsci 1971, 464-465, italics mine)

In many regards, other scholars have already spoken to the intellectual and political currents of Gramsci’s day. There are a number of useful sources that can be turned to for thorough accounts of Gramsci’s intellectual and political milieu. Bellamy offers insight into the early intellectual influences on Gramsci’s life, in particular the Vocean influences that were intertwined with Gramsci’s early Sardinian Nationalism. (Bellamy 1994, xi-xiii) Hoare and Nowell-Smith offer an involved account of the political currents of the Italian working class movement over the first third of the twentieth century. (Gramsci 1971, xvii-xcvi) Morera’s work on the idealist historicism and positivist sociology of early twentieth century Italy is excellent and there is no need to replicate it here. (Morera 1990a)

Both Gramsci and these intellectual currents existed in, contributed to, attempted to make sense of and influence the larger historical context of Italy in the early Twentieth Century. While Gramsci had grown up in the largely agricultural and underdeveloped Sardinia, he went to school in Turin, a northern Italian city and major industrial and working class/socialist center of Italy. After World War I Italy was devastated, experiencing economic and political crisis, the inspiration and fear (depending on who you were) of a revolution in Russia, the ebb and tide of the industrial working class movement (concentrated particularly in such northern Italy cities as Gramsci’s Turin and also Milan), and the ultimate defeat of this movement and subsequent victory of fascism. These dramatic events and experiences took place all within the span of less than a decade. In less than ten years after the war Gramsci was to find himself in prison writing not only about his and his comrades’ failure to

give guidance to the working class movement, but also about and included in this the necessity of a party and the systematic treatment of Marxism, or the envisioned reconstruction of Marxism discussed in the previous section.

In many ways it was the dramatic and chaotic post-war environment, in combination with contending platforms for or conceptions of action, that led Gramsci to not only an appreciation of the need to reconstruct Marxism, but also influenced the exact way in which he carried out such a reconstruction.²⁰ While the demands placed upon and opportunities for the working class movement abounded in this environment, the blocks were not insignificant. In particular, as already noted, these consisted of various revisions to Marxism, the net effect of which had been to cloud the clarity as to the purpose and tasks facing not only the party but also the working class movement as a whole.

Alluded to earlier, it was the flawed understanding of Marx, the confusing of his theoretical affirmations for the whole of what his work had to offer, and in particular the economistic interpretation of his work, that had underpinned both the right and left wings of the worker's movement, and in particular the PSI (Socialist Party of Italy) and PCI (Communist Party of Italy). Both revisions that Gramsci spoke to in his reference to Labriola's concept of the "dual revision" were regressions from the core innovation of Marx's work, the arrival at the dialectical relationship between the material and ideal which then underpinned a string of additional dialectical

²⁰ As discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, by use of the term reconstruction I do not intend to convey the idea that Gramsci attempted to correct any of Marx's methodological concerns or developments. While early on there were contradictory and ambiguous references to positivist influences that had been a part of Marx's work, the main thrust of Gramsci's labor was to return to and employ the method that Marx had offered. For sure in the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci was concerned mainly with systematizing not correcting Marx's method. There may be some intellectual development that happens inevitably as the act of reappropriation takes place in relationship to particular historical challenges and intellectual currents of day. Additionally, given historical developments there will necessarily be some changes required in the economic and political theory. While there may be some changes in underlying methodology, this was not what Gramsci was advocating.

relationships (subject and object, theory and practice, structure and superstructure, economics and politics). Such a regression had political implications, mainly a lack of appreciation for the moral and intellectual development of the masses, and thus the Party's role, how it should be structured and what its relationship to the masses should be.²¹

Gramsci's political biography underscores the seriousness and significance of the flawed Marxist approaches with which he was dealing. Beyond influencing his appreciation of the need to reconstruct Marxism, this environment and his engagement with it also influenced the exact way in which he carried out such a reconstruction. It influenced his return to Marx's method, not just his doctrine, as well as the emphasis he placed on political theory. The seeds of such an orientation were present in his earliest political essays.

Writing in December 1917, just months after the Russian Revolution, in a piece entitled "Revolution Against Capital," Gramsci made the crucial distinction between Marx's doctrine and Marx's thought. For Gramsci the Second International and its adherents had mistakenly interpreted Marxism as a set of dogmatic and unquestionable claims and thus as such Marxism had become solely a doctrine or ideology. Yet Gramsci suggested that while theoretical assertions were a part of Marxism, it was Marx's thought that was its "deeper message" and "real lifeblood." (Gramsci 1994, 40)

²¹ While clear from early on of the need to form will (and all that this entailed, for it was not just an ideological act but rather required the rigorous intellectual development of the masses), Gramsci was until later in his political career not able to win the Party to this general conception. In part this flowed from the fact that he was not clear on the full range of organizational forms (factory councils, soviets, the party, etc.) required for the task of developing will. In part his failure to appreciate the role of the bourgeois state (even though his discussions from early on are similar in many regards to his later formulations) and the nature of fascism also undermined his appreciation of the necessity of a party national in scope and capacity. Thus he failed to put resource into the fight for such a party until it was too late.

Arguably, we can interpret his use of the term “thought” as a reference to the underlying method that underpinned Marx’s work. Such an assertion on Gramsci’s point can be seen as similar to his later instructions that in the larger project of reconstructing Marxism it was necessary to first deal in a systematic way with its “general philosophical part,” elsewhere referred to as historical or general methodology, before dealing in a systematic way with economic or political theory.

It is clear from this piece, and others of the time, that for Gramsci Marx’s thought was the means by which Marx and those after him were able to understand and assess the economic structure in such a way so as to be able inform the proletariat’s activity and shape its will. For Gramsci, while the formation of the proletariat’s will was essential, it was on the basis of clarity as to its situation and not just ideological conviction that flowed from a mechanical determinism that such will was formed.

In these early writings, and even more so in later writings, Gramsci clarified Marx’s thought, or its content, as having to do with the historical dialectic, a concept which though he only used by name in his *Prison Notebooks*, in essence seemed to be already part of his thinking at this early point.

While there was some ambiguity or ambivalence in Gramsci’s early take on Marx’s thought, seemingly entirely settled by his prison writings, Gramsci did not seem to waver at all in his appreciation for Marx’s accomplishments and his understanding of what should be Marxist thought. Writing in May 1918, on the centennial of Marx’s birth, in a piece entitled “Our Marx,” it’s clear that Gramsci had a deep reverence for Marx as having achieved consciousness for the proletariat. Even in his early essays Gramsci was writing so as to convey to and clarify for folks what were Marx’s accomplishments. While on a couple occasions Gramsci critiqued Marx

for having succumbed to the positivism of his day, the majority of his writings were colored by deep appreciation.

In his December 1917 essay “Revolution Against Capital” Gramsci spoke of “Marxist thought ... which, in Marx, was contaminated by positivist and naturalist incrustations.” (Gramsci 1994, 40) However, in his January 1918 essay entitled “Critical Criticism” Gramsci spoke of “the sterilization of Marx’s doctrine at the hands of Positivist Socialists [that] was not exactly a mighty cultural advance, and was not accompanied by any great practical advances, either.” (Gramsci 1994, 43)

In his May 1918 essay, “Our Marx,” Gramsci spoke of how “in order to establish with precision the historical ends of a nation, a society, a social grouping, the most important thing to know is what system and relations of production and exchange obtain in that nation, that society.” (Gramsci 1994, 56) Yet for Gramsci structural tendencies determined only the general direction of history. Once made aware of these laws the masses could be influential in history. There was a clear recognition in these early writings of both the objective and subjective premises that his concept of historical necessity, written about later on in his *Prison Notebooks*, captured perhaps more precisely.

Such an understanding factored into all the other important themes of his early writings - from the formation of the proletariat’s will (what was an intentional and demanding project which focused on not just their commitment, but also their clarity and capacity) and self-differentiation or political independence, to the integral role of intellectuals and criticism in such a project, to his evolving take on the requisite social organs and institutions of the proletarian movement. While these themes formed the core of his political theory, to which we will turn shortly, here we first look in more detail at his understanding of, or the way in which he appropriated, Marx’s method.

Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method and his reconstruction of Marxism as a whole emerged from and can only be understood in the context of the nexus of three influences – the historical challenges facing the movement and society, the intellectual and political currents that sought to understand and address these challenges, and the combined state in which Marx left his body of work and the access that Gramsci had to this work. As Morera brilliantly suggests, without this context Gramsci's interpreters are prone to attach theoretical significance to elements of Gramsci's work that for him were, given his circumstance, politically significant only. (Morera 1990a, 60)

Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method was not done in isolation or determined by the intention of reappropriation, but rather in the context of historical challenges and intellectual currents, what Lawner calls the "historically determined culture." (Gramsci 1973, 45) While part of Gramsci's method was the product of an intentional reappropriation of Marx's method, part was influenced by the distinct intellectual currents, historical challenges, and political struggles of his day. All of the above applies to both the why and how of Gramsci's focus on politics and the development of Marxist political theory.

Thus even though it was his intent, Gramsci's Marxism cannot be assumed or understood as completely the same as Marx's Marxism. I do not intend to get consumed by the question of what is new in Gramsci's method relative to Marx's method. It will suffice to say that Gramsci's reappropriation and reconstruction was necessarily intertwined with originality.

It appears that what Gramsci saw as core to his own method he traced in one way or another to Marx – from his ontological understanding of historical duration, historical necessity, and the distinction between appearance and essence, to his epistemological position on the unity of theory and practice, to his methodological

principles of the need for diachronic and synchronic analysis and the manner of developing and employing abstraction and concepts. What he considered a leitmotiv for Marx, historical necessity, became a leitmotiv for him. Additionally, he adopted what he considers to be Marx's epistemological and historical dialectics. It is to a more thorough investigation of Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method that we now turn.

Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method

As already established, there is a commonly accepted open-endedness to Gramsci's work. While we can discern his envisioned project of reconstructing Marxism from his explicit discussion of it, when it comes to his own reconstructed Marxism, an implicit method has to be made explicit, extracted from both his reflexive discussions of it and what Morera calls Gramsci's dominant activity – his political writings. In much the same way that Gramsci talked of the need to conduct a systematic treatment of Marx's method, Gramsci's method too requires such a systematic treatment where it is distilled from his life's work. In this we can turn to Morera whose interpretation of Gramsci is bold and innovative in a way similar to Ollman's interpretation of Marx.

In this discussion of Gramsci's method I'll use the practice, established in the earlier chapter on Marx, of looking at his underlying philosophical position (ontological and epistemological), his more general guidelines for or principles of historical research, and his technique of critique. As will be seen, Gramsci's ontology and epistemology, more than the rest of his method, have to be inferred from his discussion of criteria for historical research and his political writings. They also can only be understood in the context of the intellectual climate in which he existed.

In explaining Gramsci's underlying philosophical position and broad research guidelines I rely on Morera's interpretive work. I rely on my own treatment of Gramsci on critique, a theme that Morera does not explicitly include in his model of Gramsci's method. Given our differing overall projects, my work extends beyond Morera in two additional senses. First, I am interested in how Gramsci's method was a re-appropriation of Marx's method conducted in the context of his (Gramsci's) historically determined situation. Second, I am interested in distilling out the main elements of the method in such a way so as to make them accessible to those interested in picking them up so as to employ his approach. Thus while Morera's interpretive work is academically dense, I've tried to boil his key insights down into more accessible ideas.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Gramsci's Method

Gramsci's Ontology

In many ways Gramsci did not offer an explicit discussion of the nature of reality in general and social reality in particular. Thus I attempt here, drawing largely on insights from Morera, to extract from Gramsci's general methodological discussion of how to study society a sense of how he understood that society. The ontology that emerges from this exercise is realist, materialist, distinguishes between the external and internal or appearance and essence of history, is a qualified holism, has a relational conception of reality, and views society in terms of the forms and mechanisms of its motion.

In contrast with and polemic against idealist historicism, Gramsci's realist and materialist ontology, similar to Marx's, subscribed to the notions of a reality that existed independent of the knowing subject, the act of producing knowledge and the knowledge produced (realism) and a reality that was limited to nature and society

(materialism). In contrast with and polemic against empiricism and positivism, Gramsci's ontology, drawing on Marx's method, made the distinction between the form in which things appeared and their underlying essence. In particular between events and the underlying generative mechanisms that produced them. "The distinction between the external and internal aspects of history that had been used by historicists since Vico, [was] used by Gramsci to oppose what he [called] 'external description' to analysis of the 'causal nexus'." (Morera 1990a, 96)

Gramsci had a similar critique of empiricism as Marx. Morera asserts that they both argued

"that the external aspects of history, the appearances, must be explained by the internal ones, the essence. The internal aspects are, for Gramsci, a 'causal nexus' and, as I have indicated before, social structures such as class-relations, and functions, such as hegemony, play an important role in shaping the causal nexus. The subject matter of history, then, is not the immediate events, although these are also considered and explained, nor is it the predicate, such as Croce's liberty. The subject matter of history is the complex interaction of sub-processes which is the ever-changing situation." (Morera 1990a, 96)

While idealist historicists attributed the historical process to transcendent metaphysics, and reductionist or ultra-materialist materialism attributed it to causal laws, modeled after the laws of physics, alone, Gramsci suggested that the historical process could only be understood in starting explanations by looking at the "relations among human beings and between humankind and nature." (Morera 1990a, 54)

From the fact that for Gramsci events could only be understood in the context of the larger context in which they occurred or existed, Morera suggests that Gramsci subscribed to a "guarded and partial" holism of parts and whole. (Morera 1990a, 82) For Morera, Gramsci subscribed to holism, or the "view 'that in any given society we cannot understand the parts unless we understand their function and roles in relation to

each other and in relation to the whole’.” (Morera 1990a, 80) Gramsci’s notion of holism included the recognition that “there are elements in the social whole that are causally primary,” for instance his “view that the social relations of production were determining in the last instance.” (Morera 1990a, 80) For Gramsci the “sum of the parts [resulted] in the passage from quantity into quality.” (Morera 1990a, 81) The laws of the whole could not be reduced to the laws that regulated “the behavior of the component parts outside of the system or whole.” (Morera 1990a, 81) “Social wholes did not exist apart from the activity of individuals.” (Morera 1990a, 81) For Gramsci wholes, unlike aggregates, were “subject to laws that [could not] be reduced to the laws applying to its individual members separately.” (Morera 1990a, 81)

From this, though not emphasized in this way by Morera, it can also be said that Gramsci subscribed to a relational conception of reality. The meaning of a social phenomena depended on “its occurrence in a determinate net of relations, the causal link or nexus.” (Morera 1990a, 62) Adequate explanation of social phenomena required both “knowledge of their intrinsic properties as well as the properties of the system in which they occur.” Here Morera refers to how both Gramsci and Marx defined “human nature as the ensemble of social relations.” (Morera 1990a, 74)

In turning to Gramsci’s social ontology, it’s important to underline the way in which Gramsci attributed his method to Marx. Morera asserts that Gramsci’s reflection on Marx’s two principles provided the foundation of his historicism.²² The principles provided Gramsci with the fundamental observation that social reality existed in motion. More specifically the principles underpinned Gramsci’s thoughts on the forms and mechanisms of this motion. With respect to its forms, Gramsci

²² As referred to earlier in this chapter, these were first, “that no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop,” and second, “that no society breaks down and can be replaced until it has first developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations.” (Gramsci 1971, 177)

recognized the existence of temporal processes of different duration (organic or conjunctural). With respect to the mechanisms of this motion, Gramsci suggested that these processes criss-crossed each other in history and that it was the relationships of these processes in a more or less integrated whole that was responsible for the historical process. (Morera 1990a, 85)

Gramsci actually viewed this notion of historical causality, what Gramsci referred to as historical necessity, from two different vantage points. From one angle, as expressed above, historical necessity was understood temporally as the confluence of processes of different duration. From another angle, historical necessity was understood in terms of its objective and subjective premises. With his conception of historical necessity Gramsci tried to “grasp the totality and complexity of the historical process.” This included paying attention to both the “tendencies of the economic structure” and the “forms of popular culture that shaped the consciousness of the masses.” (Morera 1990a, 61)

Morera suggests that it is with Gramsci’s conception of historical necessity that we see most clearly the contrast between Gramsci’s historicism and other forms of historicism and social science. (Morera 1990a, 94) Whereas for the empiricism of positivist sociology the subject matter was immediate events, and whereas for the various forms of idealist historicism the subject matter was “values or meanings, liberty, or the decisions of great men,” (Morera 1990a, 188) in Gramsci’s historicism the subject matter of history was historical necessity. For Gramsci historical necessity was not understood solely in terms of causal laws, (Morera 1990a, 38) but as the “complex and contradictory relations and struggles that [were] formed on the basis of social relations of production.” (Morera 1990a, 188) Such a “complex set of relationships ... [accounted] for the historical process as a whole, but not necessarily for everything that [happened] in a society.” (Morera 1990a, 38)

With respect to other forms of Marxism, Gramsci's discussion of necessity is broader than many Marxist discussions of necessity in that it included not just historical tendencies abstracted as historical laws, but also the subjective awareness of these tendencies and the capacity to act. For Gramsci historical necessity was understood as historical causality that had some form of law acting in it. In contrasting what he called the "historical dialectic" with the efforts of reductionist Marxism to "reduce everything to a single ultimate or final cause" we can see that by historical dialectic Gramsci referred to his concept of historical necessity, the relationship between structure and superstructure, objective and subjective premises, and social forces in contradiction with each other. (Gramsci 1971, 437)

Morera suggests that for Gramsci historical necessity "[required] both the existence of a set of objective conditions and consciousness of them, as well as of the existing possibilities for action." (Morera 1990a, 124) For Gramsci "historical necessity [became] effective when there [was] a consciousness of the material conditions that [were], so to speak, the backbone of such necessity." (Morera 1990a, 119) As Morera states, "historical necessity, then, [was] not merely constituted by the structure, but by the structure plus" (Morera 1990a, 182) "the degree of consciousness" (Morera 1990a, 153) and "the organized actions of groups that [emerged] on the basis of their position in the social world." (Morera 1990a, 182) Thus for Morera Gramsci's concept of historical necessity included what constituted it, what it required to become effective, and what it then accounted for or resulted in. By historical necessity Gramsci seemed to be getting at the synergistic propulsion or necessity that flowed from the concurrence of structural and superstructural processes of different duration and resulted in the historical process as a whole. From the above we can see that Gramsci did "not deny either the determining effects of structural

conditions nor the decisive role of politics, that [was], organized action.” (Morera 1990a, 124)

While Gramsci’s conception of historical necessity was not defined solely by causal laws, it did include a notion of historical laws. Contained within Morera’s discussion of Gramsci’s concept of historical necessity (and comprising or constituting the situation and its causal nexus) is the concept of historical laws. Before getting into a substantive discussion as to what were Gramsci’s historical laws, Morera deals with what they were not. Specifically, Gramsci’s causal laws were different from positivist and empiricist causal laws, idealist historicism’s conception of laws, and vulgar ultra-materialist Marxism’s causal laws.²³ Here again we see within Gramsci’s conception of historical necessity the contrast between his and other social sciences approaches and the way in which Gramsci’s concepts were themselves critiques of prevailing intellectual approaches.

Yet for Gramsci “some forms of law acted in social processes.” (Morera 1990a, 100) Such laws could help to explain the appearance of regularity in historical development. It was to such regularity that Gramsci referred when he spoke of how

²³ According to Morera, Gramsci’s causal laws differed from positivist and empiricist causal laws on two counts. First, his historical laws were not “conjunctions of events, such as that whenever A occurs, then B occurs.” For Gramsci, events were not causally primary. “The patterns of events [were] not the cause but rather the effect, or manifestation of a deeper causal mechanism.” (Morera 1990a, 101) Secondly, his historical laws were not “eternal or unchangeable.” (Morera 1990a, 102) They were not “general laws of causality.” (Morera 1990a, 103) For Gramsci historical causality was not a general question but “an empirical problem, one that required the most thorough and careful analysis of existing documents.” (Morera 1990a, 97) For Gramsci this was a principle for historical research. [Burawoy suggests it is a flaw in his work.] Gramsci’s causal laws also differed from idealist historicism’s conception of laws which subscribed to “extra-historical causes; such as Providence or biology.” (Morera 1990a, 102) Gramsci’s historical laws were not “metaphysical laws of determination.” (Morera 1990a, 103) He rejected such a speculative conception of law for its transcendent conception of history. Finally for Gramsci, and in contrast to some forms of vulgar Marxism, while there was some connection between the historical laws of one epoch and the next, historical laws were not “over-reaching laws of history, laws that, either as teleological tendencies [necessitated] a number of necessary stages, or tendencies that [resulted] from some property of society, inevitably [impelled] history through a series of epochs.” (Morera 1990a, 106) For Gramsci there was no law of history that produced concrete political and ideological forms out of the changes in the structure. (Morera 1990a, 152)

“in the course of history ‘almost always similar situations [arose]’.” (Morera 1990a, 101) By this Gramsci referred to the similar stages of development of classes and the recurring “task of creating a new moral and intellectual order” that confronted “any new hegemonic group.” (Morera 1990a, 100)

For Morera Gramsci’s historical laws were “tendencies abstracted from empirical reality” (Morera 1990a, 152) or “tendencies that [could] be identified by isolating certain aspects of the social process.”²⁴ (Morera 1990a, 128-129) They “identified the generative mechanisms of different duration that together accounted for the historical process.” (Morera 1990a, 128-129) While it appears that some were economic (like the tendency of the rate of profit to fall) and some were social (tendencies towards uniformity or conformism that operate within society) they all found their origins in the social structure or relations of production.

For Gramsci social processes were dialectical in the sense that they were characterized by fundamental contradictions. Because of this, events were not uniquely determined by any given causal law, but rather by the conjunction of different and often opposed tendencies. Morera continues that “in reality, history [was] an open process where a number of contradictory tendencies [produced] events that [were] not always predictable, though the general conditions of the process [were] rational, that is, predictable.” (Morera 1990a, 128-129) While there were tendencies in the structure of the capitalist mode of production, the outcome of these tendencies depended on the response of organized forces. (Morera 1990a, 100) Gramsci suggested that it was the role of intellectuals to “link dialectically the passion of the masses to the laws of history” suggesting that not only self-awareness but also

²⁴ Morera’s discussion of Gramsci’s use of the concept of historical laws is similar to Ollman’s discussion of Marx’s use of the abstraction of the level of generality.

effective political activity required knowledge of the laws of history. (Morera 1990a, 100)

We can see from all of this that Gramsci did not reject the concept of causality. He did however reject the “attribution of single causes to social phenomena.” (Morera 1990a, 96) Gramsci contrasted the “simplistic model of linear causality,” (Morera 1990a, 99) which often led to the “question of the first cause, the prime mover,” (Morera 1990a, 99) with his own complex concept of causality, (Morera 1990a, 99) what he occasionally referred to as structural or “dialectical causality,” that focused on “the relation between different sub-processes, structures and superstructures, within a whole.” (Morera 1990a, 97) Morera states it was the historically evolved “social relations and the specific manner in which they [structured] social wholes that [were] causally primary.” (Morera 1990a, 101) For Gramsci as with Marx every society was characterized by a dynamic or historically evolved specific relation of social forces based upon a particular structure of the productive apparatus. These relations were guaranteed by a political, moral and juridical superstructure. (Gramsci 1971, 410)

Gramsci's epistemology

Turning to the issue of Gramsci's epistemology, Morera asserts that while there were epistemological theses in Gramsci's thought, Gramsci was in the main going for “actual historical and political explanations from within a supposed epistemological framework never fully developed, much less defended, by him.” (Morera 1990a, 37) There was no “general epistemological theory about what [counted] as knowledge or about what [could] be known.” (Morera 1990a, 37)

Similar to Gramsci's ontology, when looking at Gramsci's implicit epistemology it is useful to place it in the context of the intellectual and political environment in which it existed. Through such an approach we can more fully

understand Gramsci's realist epistemology, his pursuit of epistemological objectivity, or what Morera refers to as Gramsci's recognition of the correspondence theory of truth that suggested that the truth of a theory depended on its correspondence to reality. Such a realist epistemology was a polemic against both the voluntarist activism of the new generation, those who ignored a serious analysis of the situation they faced, that Gramsci talks of in his early writings, and the economic or reductionist Marxism, which was by far the greater concern for Gramsci, that attributed all social change to structural determinants. In a sense, for Morera Gramsci's realist epistemology was nothing other than the affirmation that knowledge had to correspond to reality in order to allow for effective political action.

From this vantage point, the requirement of action to correspond to reality underpinned the idea that there was a reality independent of the knowing subject and his knowledge of it. Yet from another vantage point, or on the other hand, it was exactly such a distinction between subject and object that Marx had overcome with his recognition that the subject impacted on the object and was part of the object.

Morera distinguishes between Gramsci's ontology, and related historical and sociological explanation, which as seen recognized ideas as social phenomena or superstructural elements the origins of which were to be looked for in the historical process, and Gramsci's epistemology which dealt with the conditions of truth and the assessment of empirical claims. (Morera 1990a, 65) Thus the social origins, context and function of knowledge were separated from its truth. Morera asserts that for Gramsci the truth of knowledge had to do with its correspondence to reality and there were certain limits on this in terms of the complexity and motion of reality as well as

the social factors that influenced the knowing subject and the process of producing knowledge.²⁵

Arguably Morera's practice of seeing Gramsci's epistemology as having only to do with the truth of knowledge and not its social function flows from his use of the critical realist paradigm. In this he is like Walker who, also influenced by critical realism, discusses Marx's epistemology in similar terms. By referring to Gramsci's epistemology as realist, which limits the conception of epistemology to one focused on the explanation of reality, Morera has to include the other elements he acknowledges as part of Gramsci's views on knowledge in what he calls a historical and sociological theory of knowledge. But epistemology can also be defined as the relationship between knowledge and reality such that we can speak not only of the truth of knowledge (via its correspondence to reality) but also its function (one of either obscuring and maintaining reality or illuminating and facilitating the changing of reality).²⁶

Along similar lines, and contra to Morera's interpretation, Gramsci, like Shlomo Avineri on Marx, seemed to include both aspects, truth and function, in his understanding of Marx's epistemology. (Avineri 1968, 69, 136, 148) In fact for Gramsci, Avineri and Roy Edgeley, it was this particular formulation or conception of epistemology, an expanded definition of epistemology, that was Marx's

²⁵ Morera suggests that Gramsci acknowledged the limits to epistemological objectivity. First, epistemological objectivity was limited by the "vastness of reality and the indefinitely complex interconnections among things." Second, it was limited by the "institutional and intellectual conditions of the acquisition of knowledge" which were not, "and may never be, sufficiently adequate for knowledge perfect to its subject matter." (Morera 1990a, 46) Thus epistemological objectivity was limited or incomplete in the sense that "it [was] rooted in the intellectual and practical activities of historical agents and it [was] conditioned by those activities." (Morera 1990a, 46)

²⁶ If these other elements are included in Gramsci's epistemology than we either have to say his epistemology has a realist element, is a dialectical realist epistemology, or that it is not realist.

epistemological innovation or what Edgley calls Marx's philosophical revolution.²⁷
(Edgley 1979)

Gramsci himself seemed to stress the importance of epistemology and its dialectical nature when he said that the dialectic was Marx's "doctrine of knowledge and the very marrow of historiography and the science of politics." (Gramsci 1971, 435) Given the context of Gramsci's discussion, which places it in relationship to idealist and materialist philosophy, Gramsci was arguably referring to Marx's transcendence of the dualism implicit in both idealism and materialism with his conception of the dialectical relationship between material and mental, subject and object, theory and practice. (Gramsci 1971, 334, 340, 344, 346, 365, 401, 405, 418, 435) Elsewhere Gramsci suggested that philosophy had gone from being conceived as receptive or an ordering activity, as knowledge of a mechanism that functioned objectively outside man (traditional materialism), to being creative, in the sense of creativity of thought, but in an idealistic and speculative sense (as with idealist philosophy), to being creative in the sense of thought that modified the way of feeling of the many and consequently of reality itself ... also in the sense that it teaches reality does not exist on its own, in and for itself, but only in an historical relationship with the men who modify it, etc. (as with Marxism). (Gramsci 1971, 346)

Finally, Gramsci noted that while in Hegel could be found a "consciousness of contradictions," in Marx could be found not only a consciousness of contradictions, but the understanding of the knowing subject as "an element of the contradiction" as well as the elevation of this observation to "a principle of knowledge and therefore action." (Gramsci 1971, 405) Gramsci's conception of the organic intellectual as part of the social process he was studying also speaks to this point.

²⁷ It seems that Ollman avoids this whole debate. Yet Ollman suggests other aspects of epistemology that flow from ontology even if not made explicit by Gramsci.

Morera thus avoids having to acknowledge what Gramsci and Avineri seem to see as the epistemological revolution that Marx established. While Morera can acknowledge Gramsci's discussion of theory and practice, what Walker calls Marx's praxis thesis, this is separate from his discussion of Gramsci's epistemology. In many ways this may just be a case of different ways of abstracting Gramsci's method. But it seems related to how critical realism thinks of epistemology in general. While for Walker this seems to interfere with his understanding of Marx's method, in terms of its relation to Marx's political theory and practice, for Morera this does not seem to be the case.

In one sense a realist ontology combined with a correspondence theory of knowledge, with its mandate that knowledge correspond to reality, could be a conservative thing. But a dialectical realist epistemology, and Morera in different places seems to speak to Gramsci's realism as a dialectical variant of realism, would recognize that while in a synchronic sense we aim to have our knowledge correspond to reality at a particular moment in time, in a diachronic sense as soon as we achieve this our accomplishment changes that reality.

Gramsci's Broad Research Guidelines

With Gramsci's epistemology insisting that knowledge had to be adequate to reality and his ontology subscribing to the notion of reality as in motion and driven by underlying generative mechanisms, historical investigation was the only form of investigation that could be appropriate for the study of reality. By historical Gramsci included an approach that combined both diachronic and synchronic analysis. Methodologically there were three important research guidelines that ensued.

The first research guideline suggested the use of the concept of the situation as the unit of historical and political analysis. Situations were the conjuncture of

structural and superstructural processes, each with their own duration, dynamic, temporality (organic and conjunctural). A situation was defined as the interrelationship or reciprocal action of concurring/temporal sub-processes of different duration, resulting in an event or change in the overall pattern. (Morera 1990a, 97, 114) “It [was] the situation, and in particular, the array of social forces that [were] engaged in struggle for hegemony, [that constituted] the unit of analysis of history.” (Morera 1990a, 188) Related to this was the use of the concept of the causal nexus to capture the effective aspect of the situation. For Gramsci the causal nexus, or essence, was shaped by social structures, such as class relations, and functions, such as hegemony. (Morera 1990a, 96)

The situation and causal nexus allowed Gramsci to pay adequate attention to the organic and conjunctural aspects, or the diachronic and synchronic aspects, of history. Gramsci’s diachronic analysis referred to the need to look at long-term processes, and in particular the economic structure. As referred to earlier, Gramsci suggested that the “historical process could only be understood in starting explanations by looking at the relations among human beings and between humankind and nature.” (Morera 1990a, 54) It was to just such relations that Gramsci referred when he spoke of long-term processes.²⁸ According to Morera, for Gramsci, synchronic analysis was understood as studying processes of conjunctural or short-term duration. Together the concepts of the situation and causal nexus incorporated Gramsci’s understanding of historical time and historical necessity, the dialectical relationship between structural and superstructural aspects of history, as well as the need for analysis that was both diachronic and synchronic.

²⁸ Though stated differently, Morera’s insight on this research guideline of Gramsci’s is similar to Ollman’s observation about Marx’s research guideline on starting investigations with system before history.

The second research guideline had to do with the need for the historical explanation of a situation to investigate both its antecedents and consequences. Since Gramsci did not have a general theory of causality, causality was an empirical problem. For Gramsci historical investigation of what in the past had contributed to causing the present would assist with identifying the possibilities in the present to be taken advantage in determining the future. Gramsci also held that subsequent events shed light on preceding ones. The significance of social phenomena was judged on the basis of their function or consequences. Here Morera asserts that Gramsci's functional explanations were not teleological. A corollary point was the idea that when it came to studying the present, the expected or predicted outcome of the present situation was relevant evidence for understanding the situation. Predictions and trends were key to fuller but tentative descriptions of current phenomena. Here Morera suggests that for Gramsci attempts at understanding the present were to be seen as uncorroborated hypotheses.²⁹

The third research guideline had to do with the development and use of concepts that had a temporal element or were historical. Gramsci's use of concepts was contrasted with both sociological abstractions and the metaphysical concepts of Croce. Through what he called "determined abstraction," a complex procedure of abstraction, Gramsci asserted that the "long-term transformations of a system [yielded] the best evidence for constructing the appropriate conceptual and theoretical frameworks." (Morera 1990a, 187) For Gramsci concepts were derived from historical reality (experience) and reflected real social entities. (Morera 1990a, 48-49) However, while some concepts, class for instance, referred to long-term underlying

²⁹ There is some similarity here with Ollman's discussion of how projections of the future could be used to understand and influence the present. However, here Morera doesn't bring in the latter aspect of how projections of the future can be used to influence the present. As will be seen, Burawoy also sees this in Gramsci, describing it as a telos or preferred end point from which Gramsci viewed the present.

transformational processes and were thus “long-term concepts,” other concepts, like social groups, hegemony and historical blocs, referred to more short-term processes and were thus short-term concepts. (Morera 1990a, 187, 104)

Additionally, Morera suggests that Gramsci’s concepts, such as his conceptions of transience and historical necessity, were often both ontological and methodological - they stated both what he saw as the constituent parts of reality and the relations between these parts, as well as how to study this social reality. Methodologically, the concepts were actually principles of research, in that they were not only his efforts at reflections of empirical reality but also general hypotheses demanding empirical investigation. By calling such principles and concepts methodological, Gramsci suggested that they were to be regarded as tentative, liable to be found inappropriate, and thus they were not to be uncritically superimposed on reality.

In his objection to empiricism Gramsci asserted that all enquiry into social reality must start with a “pre-existing criterion of choice ... something superior to each single fact under enquiry.” (Gramsci 1971, 461) Here Gramsci was in effect arguing for making an aware or informed and explicit decision about such criteria. Morera suggests that Gramsci subscribed to the position that “one must first have a criterion for choosing the relevant facts or the relevant relations among them, and this ‘presupposes a “concept” that allows one to distinguish the facts’.” (Morera 1990a, 96)

Uncommented upon by Morera, yet seemingly important, is the observation that we can see in Gramsci’s use of concepts, and how he used the same concepts in different ways, that Gramsci recognized concepts could be used to abstract reality differently. Thus Ollman’s conception of a philosophy of internal relations is perhaps implicit in Gramsci’s understanding of Marx’s method.

Gramsci Technique of Critique (or The Role of Critique in Gramsci's Method)

Morera makes the critical observation that Gramsci's historicism or intellectual approach as a whole, and every aspect of it, was itself a critique of the prevailing intellectual currents of idealist historicism, positivist sociology, and ultra-materialist Marxism – their understandings of the subject of history, adequate explanation, the scientific method, and the purpose of knowledge as well as the political implications of all of the above. Additionally, it can also be said that critique, or polemic, was itself an important distinct element of Gramsci's method. While Gramsci's overall method helped him to understand reality, as already established an important piece of reality was the different views of reality. It was to these views that polemic was directed in terms of thorough analysis of these views, their fundamental underpinnings, and argument with them. Gramsci's return to Marx's method allowed him to engage in polemic on a much more fundamental level than just the realm of political theory. Or, said another way, his return to Marx's method gave him more leverage when it came to critiquing political theory.

In this sense it was a vital part of Gramsci's understanding of politics. But it was not the all of politics. More will be said on this shortly. The fact that there was a clear similarity between Gramsci and Marx on this point should not be surprising given that early on in his writings Gramsci established his familiarity with Marx's critique of the critical criticism of the Young Hegelians. (Gramsci 1994, 43-46)

Perhaps Gramsci himself best sums up the point I am trying to establish here when he makes the brilliant observation that “by its nature” the philosophy of praxis, tended “towards being a mass philosophy.” It thus could “only be conceived in a polemical form and in the form of a perpetual struggle.” (Gramsci 1971, 421)³⁰ In

³⁰ As spoken to earlier in this chapter, its targets were common sense, the “spontaneous philosophy of the multitude,” as well as traditional philosophy. (Gramsci 1971, 421)

short, Marxism (and Marx's method in particular) was inherently polemical because since it was bent on changing the world, and since ideas were influential and influenced actions, ideas that interfered with necessary action had to be critiqued.

Yet for Gramsci the historical struggle in which Marxism was engaged had to be understood as consisting of two parts. While the first, the one just referred to, was "negative and polemical," the second was "positive," consisting of the "struggle for an autonomous and superior culture," or the "construction of a new intellectual and moral order." (Gramsci 1971, 388) Speaking of the philosophy of praxis as a "new, independent and original conception," Gramsci suggested that "before the formation of the new State" its attitude could "only be critico-polemical, never dogmatic." (Gramsci 1971, 398) Yet it had to be an attitude "aspiring to its classical synthesis." (Gramsci 1971, 398)

In addition to his historical discussion of the role of polemical form in Marx's method, Gramsci also discussed Marxism's use of polemic in a pedagogical context. Speaking of how to introduce and teach the philosophy of praxis to the masses, Gramsci suggested that "a philosophy of praxis cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superseding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of 'common sense' ... it must then be a criticism of the philosophy of the intellectuals ..." (Gramsci 1971, 330-331)

Perhaps the most well known reference of Gramsci to the necessity of any specific polemic, in both the historical and pedagogical senses used here, was his reference to Engel's late work *Anti-Duhring*. With the "philosophy of intellectuals" (Gramsci 1971, 330) in mind, Gramsci states "A new *Anti-Duhring* could be written, which from this point of view would be an 'Anti-Croce,' and which brought together not only a polemic against speculative philosophy but also that against positivism,

mechanism and degenerate forms of the philosophy of praxis itself.” (Gramsci 1971, 371)

Thus we see that for Gramsci, polemic was many things. It was the form Marxism took in its appearance and early stages, a means towards Marxism’s reconstruction (wrestling with internal and external currents as part of the process), inherent in it as a whole and each element of it, as well as a critical element of Marxism that it employed in accomplishing its tasks. While critique was a necessary element of what Marxism had to do in order to achieve its objectives, it can also be said that it was at least in part through such critique that Gramsci’s particular and actual reappropriation of Marx’s method and overall reconstruction of Marxism emerged. Given Gramsci’s formulation of Marxism’s tasks, he placed special emphasis on polemic – what it was or how it should be understood, and how to do it. It is to this set of comments that we now turn briefly.

For Gramsci the objectives of polemics and critiques against contending intellectual approaches was to raise the intellectual level of ones own forces. Such forces had to understand things deeply enough so as to be able to argue and debate matters rigorously and generally proceed in their political activity according to such a deep understanding. However, while the focus was on intellectual and moral development, the trick was to not fall into a sectarian style of work that would “[create] a desert around oneself.” (Gramsci 1971, 439) Additionally, Gramsci felt it important to note that polemics should not be seen as destroying the contending social forces and ideas, but rather as contributing to developing the self-differentiation of ones own forces and their capacity for developing “original doctrine of [their] own, corresponding to [their] own conditions of life.” (Gramsci 1971, 440)

In achieving these ends, and in polemic against what he considered Bukharin's poor polemical practice, Gramsci made the important distinction between politico-military struggle and ideological struggle.

“In the political and military struggle it can be correct tactics to break through at the points of least resistance in order to be able to assault the strongest points with maximum forces that have been precisely made available by the elimination of the weaker auxiliaries. Political and military victories, within certain limits, have a permanent and universal value and strategic end can be attained decisively with a general effect for everyone. On the ideological front, however, the defeat of the auxiliaries and the minor hangers-on is of all but negligible importance. Here it is necessary to engage in battle with the most eminent of one's adversaries.” (Gramsci 1971, 432-433)

Elsewhere Gramsci translates this idea into the following guideline for polemics:

“It is not very ‘scientific,’ or more simply it is not very ‘serious,’ to choose to combat the stupidest and most mediocre of one's opponents or even to choose the least essential and the most occasional of their opinions and then to presume thereby to have ‘destroyed’ ‘all’ the enemy because one has destroyed a secondary and incidental opinion of his or to have destroyed an ideology or a doctrine because one has demonstrated the theoretical inadequacy of its third- or fourth-rate champions.” (Gramsci 1971, 440)

He went on to suggest that “what counts is not the opinion of Tom, Dick, and Harry, but that ensemble of opinions which have become collective, a social element and a social force. These are the opinions that must be refuted, in the person of those of their theoretical exponents who are most representative and indeed worthy of respect for the high quality of their thought and for their ‘disinterestedness’ in the immediate term.” (Gramsci 1971, 440) Finally, Gramsci cautioned that “one must be fair to one's enemies’, in the sense that one must make an effort to understand what

they really meant to say and not maliciously stop short at the superficial immediate meaning of their expressions.” (Gramsci 1971, 440)

Gramsci’s Political Theory

Gramsci’s political theory is of interest to us because it was underpinned by his reappropriation of Marx’s method, it assumed and built upon Marx’s work in political economy, it was the area of the reconstruction of Marxism that he chose to focus on, it was itself largely methodological and because it served as connective tissue between his Marxist method and his practical political activity. We start our discussion of Gramsci’s political theory with a brief review of Gramsci’s understanding of Marxism’s tasks. We then explore Gramsci’s confrontation with the political implications of the prevailing intellectual currents of his day, in particular what Morera calls Gramsci’s restricted form of essentialism. We conclude with a discussion of the methodological nature of Gramsci’s political theory.

For Gramsci Marxism’s task, and in particular the task of its method, was to study the relations of force and find the elements that would dissolve and supersede these relations. (Gramsci 1971, 411) Morera suggests that from Gramsci’s perspective, while these potentially liberating elements were more or less conscious of the existence of rules of behavior which governed their lives, to Marxism fell the task of helping these new elements to understand that these rules of behavior flowed from the prevailing structure of social relations, and thus to understand the origins of these rules, their historicity, and “hence the possibility of changing the underlying structures.” (Morera 1990a, 108) All of this could be seen as the “process of the formation of organized groups.” (Morera 1990a, 108)

Morera asserts that Gramsci appreciated the necessity of the masses reappropriating science and placing it in explicit relationship to politics so as “to

organize an effective collective will which will materialize the possibilities inherent in the present.” (Morera 1990a, 126) For Gramsci the “focus of historical investigation [was] politics in the broad sense, because it [was] concerned with unearthing the long-term process that [explained] the present as well as the possibilities of the future.” By politics in the broad sense Morera suggests that for Gramsci politics was no longer the “subject matter of history,” as in the actions of kings, but rather the “interest that [guided] the committed intellectual,” as in the organized attempt to change society. (Morera 1990a, 126) Gramsci underscored the politics and “practical significance of knowledge about society,” in particular a knowledge that assisted in the “correct identification of the trends of the present,” (Morera 1990a, 127) and raised the necessity of the masses reappropriating knowledge in its dialectical relationship to the practice of changing the world. Marxism’s dialectical understanding of the relationship between theory and practice made it essential in this regard.

Thus as we enter a discussion of Gramsci’s political theory we note that it was politics broadly defined that was the driving force and motivation of Gramsci’s intellectual and practical life. In the realm of politics Gramsci confronted the political implications of the prevailing intellectual currents, all of which obscured the role of the masses and the revolutionaries in social change. While idealist historicism in glorifying the philosopher left no role for the masses, positivist sociology flatly exalted the capitalist present. In many ways however Gramsci’s concerns were most directed at the vulgar materialism that underpinned the economism of both the right and left wings of the working class movement. As Morera suggests, Gramsci’s interest in superstructural matters may have either been from a “personal interest” or “the perceived need to fill a gap in Marxist theory” (Morera 1990a, 58) based on the feeling “that this was the least developed aspect of Marxist theory or that it was the most urgent task in the development of communism at the time.” (Morera 1990a, 60)

It was the economism of the Second International in general and the PSI in particular that he had in mind when early on he chastised those who failed to make the distinction between Marx's thought and Marx's doctrine. Such a failure had led both the right and left wings of the proletarian movement to interpret Marx's theoretical affirmations as dictating the answers to the problems they were facing as opposed to serving as methodological principles with which to arrive at a deeper understanding of the situation they faced. In particular, the mistake of interpreting Marx's theoretical affirmations through the lens of a vulgar materialism underpinned their failure to adequately grasp the necessary political interventions and the role of Marxism in this regard.

While Gramsci was clear early on that economism was a major block to the working class movement, he was even clearer on this in his prison writings in light of the Party's failure to prepare for and take full advantage of the revolutionary tide of what became known as the Red Years in Italy following World War I. Fascism had followed in the wake of this missed opportunity.³¹

Morera assists us here by suggesting that Gramsci responded to the economism of his day with a restricted form of essentialism that on the one hand saw the class structure determining the "general direction of historical movement," (Morera 1990a, 182) while on the other hand saw the causal nexus, "or the network of temporal processes which together [became] historical necessity," (Morera 1990a, 172) determining every event and social change. Gramsci critiqued economism for its

³¹ A real understanding of his political theory must be in the main based on his writings in the *Prison Notebooks*. While many of the themes are the same as in his earlier writings, there is a to be expected political and intellectual sophistication not present in the earlier writings.

failure to appreciate the causal weight of different social sub-processes, in its case superstructural processes.³²

Morera states that while Gramsci was “primarily concerned with the function of political intervention in social change he [did] not reject the thesis of the primacy of structure in the last instance.” (Morera 1990a, 139) While Gramsci’s main field of research was the superstructure and the unity of its levels (Morera 1990a, 141), for him the structural elements were the starting point and cornerstone of his analyses. This makes sense given our assessment that while political theory was the focus of his work, method was the foundation. While politics determined Gramsci’s return to Marx’s thought or method, it was this method that underpinned Gramsci’s political theory.

For Morera, while Gramsci can be seen as having “dealt mostly with superstructural matters,” (Morera 1990a, 56) (including an emphasis on hegemony, moral and intellectual leadership, the role of intellectuals, and popular culture) this did not make him a humanist Marxist or “give his studies of culture and politics a theoretical significance they did not have.” (Morera 1990a, 60) From Morera’s perspective Gramsci never accorded them a “philosophical significance” (Morera 1990a, 56) where the superstructure, or “superstructural activities,” (Morera 1990a,

³² Morera notes that such a critique can also be applied to Laclau and Mouffe’s anti-essentialism which fails to appreciate the causal weight of structural processes such as the economy and class structure. According to Morera, Laclau and Mouffe view Gramsci as articulating a non-essentialist theory of hegemony. They are able to use what they consider Gramsci’s non-essentialist political theory in their discourse theory which “[attempts] to provide a model for an adequate analysis of modern social movements,” many of which, but not all, “bear no connection to classes.” (Morera 1990a, 170-171) At the same time Laclau and Mouffe are critical of Gramsci’s underlying thought (what we can take to mean his intellectual approach) that according to them remains trapped in what they consider to be the old Marxist essentialism, an economism that suggests the economic determination of all historical change. In contrast, according to Morera, the underlying philosophical assumption of Laclau and Mouffe’s approach is that no single historical element is determinant of a situation or social phenomena or determines its meaning. Rather for Laclau and Mouffe there is an “intrinsic neutrality” to all social elements. (Morera 1990a, 171) For Morera, while Laclau and Mouffe are responding to an economism that still characterizes some currents of Marxism, such an economistic or expanded essentialism cannot be attributed to Gramsci.

60) “rather than structure, would have a primary role.” (Morera 1990a, 56) From his conception of historical necessity we can see that Gramsci assumed a non-reductionist view of the determining role of the economic structure. Morera concludes that while Gramsci’s particular version of humanism studied “humanity as it [was] expressed in folklore, culture and art, etc.” it “[presupposed] and [supplemented] the results of the analysis of political economy, it [did] not replace them.”³³ (Morera 1990a, 58)

Again, as already noted, in contrast to the prevailing vulgar materialist Marxism, at the core of Gramsci’s method was the epistemological dialectic and the historical dialectic. The historical dialectic, as expressed in his conception of historical necessity, (Gramsci 1971, 412-413) was used in the epistemological struggle against economism’s regress to mechanical materialism. Similarly, the concept of hegemony was used against economism in the realm of political theory. As Gramsci noted, it was “necessary to combat economism not only in the theory of historiography, but also and especially in the theory and practice of politics. In this field, the struggle can and must be carried on by developing the concept of hegemony – as has been done in practice in the development of the theory of the political party, and in the actual history of certain political parties ...” (Gramsci 1971, 165) Here Gramsci implicitly credited Lenin and the Russian Bolsheviks.

³³ In many ways the strictly “humanist” interpretations of Gramsci parallel the economic interpretations of Marx. While Marx emphasized the economic in his ongoing political and polemical struggle against utopian or adventurist/voluntarist socialists and anarchists in the Communist League and First International, Gramsci emphasized the political in his ongoing political and polemical struggle against the economic determinism of the Second International. The failure of both Marx and Gramsci to offer a systemic treatment of their methodological foundations and all important realms of substantive inquiry (political theory for Marx and economic theory for Gramsci) left the door open for significant misinterpretations. Morera draws our attention to how many of the interpretations of Gramsci’s political theory are flawed because they fail to place his political theory in the context of the method that underpins it. To this we can add that both the method and political theory are better understood when placed in their historical, political and intellectual environment. This is exactly what is often not done with both Marx and Gramsci.

Gramsci's method served as a foundation with which to develop a political theory adequate to the situation at hand. Said another way, Gramsci's political theory, as embodied in each of its concepts and its conceptual framework as a whole, was based upon and gave expression to the methodological concerns of his historicism, historical materialism, or intellectual approach.

As already established, for Morera Gramsci's historicism "was not a concrete theory of history, in the sense that it [specified] his thinking on concrete social phenomena, but rather a foundation for the social sciences in general, in the sense of a set of guiding principles for social research." These were not *a priori* principles but were rather principles "based on the observation that social life is human activity conditioned by structures inherited from the past." (Morera 1990a, 64) Along similar lines, arguably, what Morera is implicitly arguing is that Gramsci's historical and political theory was not a grand theory of history and politics but was rather a "conceptual framework ... for historical explanation." (Morera 1990a, 61)

Gramsci asserted that the "experience on which the philosophy of praxis [was] based [could not] be schematized; it [was] history in all its infinite variety and multiplicity." (Gramsci 1971, 428) Here he specifically referred to the schematic description and classification of historical and political facts that characterized positivist sociology, itself built on an evolutionist positivism. However Gramsci also suggested "that a theory of history and politics [could] be made, for even if the facts [were] always unique and changeable in the flux of movement of history, the concepts [could] be theorized." (Gramsci 1971, 427) Arguably, for Gramsci the acknowledgement of historical specificity, captured in his use of such concepts as historical necessity, situation and causal nexus, did not negate the possibility of generalization. In fact, an understanding of historical specificity required certain methodological criteria that were based on the field of investigation at hand.

Politics for Gramsci was informed by both historical regularities (captured in concepts) and historical tendencies (captured in laws). While Gramsci's concepts captured patterns or regularities, his conception of laws captured historical tendencies and potentialities. As Gramsci suggested, there was "practical utility to isolating certain more general 'laws of tendency'." (Gramsci 1971, 428) These concepts and laws were abstracted out of historical reality. In the spirit of Lenin's methodological directive of the necessity of concrete analyses of concrete situations, as opposed to building theories on top of each other, Gramsci employed methodological principles or theoretical affirmations about long-term structural processes in his concrete analysis of particular situations.

Given that both Gramsci's underlying method or his historicism and his political theory were methodological in nature, it makes sense to look at what differentiated the two from each other. In many ways the distinction between where Gramsci's historicism ended and his political theory began is a fine dividing line. Arguably it has to do with the level of abstraction, and the kinds of concepts adequate to the level of abstraction, that are being used. While they are both methodologies, they operate on different levels of generality. In some ways these levels of generality in Gramsci's work parallel Ollman's interpretation of the levels of generality in Marx's work. Additionally the method itself can be abstracted in different ways.

Gramsci does make the (analytical) distinction between his general historical methodology or philosophy, what Morera calls Gramsci's historicism, and his political theory. His general historical methodology operated on a more general level of specificity, utilized such concepts as transience and historical necessity, employed the concepts of the situation and causal nexus to refer to the confluence of structural and superstructural processes of different duration, and defined Gramsci's conception of

concepts and laws. According to Gramsci's historicism, the situation was understood as the unit of historical analysis and the causal nexus as its essential element.

His political theory, what Gramsci referred to as his theory of history and politics, operating on a more specific level of generality, was a more involved exploration of the relationship between structure (the economy and class structure) and superstructure (civil society and political society, ideology, common sense, high-culture and mass culture, etc.) in determining the outcome of situations. This political theory employed such concepts as historical blocs and hegemony in its methods of analyzing situations (relations of forces, the moments of political forces) and movements (Boulangist).³⁴ Said another way, it focused on the role of politics in social change by exploring how the relationship between structural and superstructural factors influenced a situation's outcome. It dealt in terms of social forces and political groups, hegemony and historical blocs, the state, etc.

By way of concluding our discussion of Gramsci's political theory, we can say a few more words about his use of concepts in this political theory. As already suggested, Gramsci's historical and political theory or science was comprised of theorized concepts. These historical concepts or principles were based on observed regularities in historical experience. But, as with the concepts of Gramsci's general methodology, they were tentative and seen as methodological devices, criteria for historical and political research, as opposed to exhaustive explanations in their own right.³⁵

While Morera doesn't explicitly make this point, it's clear from Morera's interpretive work that the concepts of Gramsci's political theory operated at a more

³⁴ Gramsci made explicit and developed certain concepts such as historical bloc and hegemony that were arguably less explicit yet still present in the works of Marx and Lenin. While he attributed the concept and action of hegemony to Lenin (Gramsci 1971, 333, 365, 381), in many ways he developed the concept beyond the use that Lenin made of it.

³⁵ This is clarified by his discussion of empiricism (Gramsci 1971, 461).

specific level of abstraction than those of his general methodology. In the shift from historicism to political theory Gramsci moved from his historicist concepts of transience and historical necessity, where the situation and causal nexus were defined in terms of processes, to his political science conception of the situation defined in terms of social forces and the contest for hegemony, the relations of forces and the moments of political forces. Here we see how Gramsci goes to an even further level of specificity when in discussing the situation and its causal nexus he moves from describing them as the confluence of structural and superstructural processes of different duration to the conflicted relations of social forces for hegemony which is captured in his use of the method of analysis of the relations of forces and the moments of political forces. Here the emphasis is on social forces rather than processes, although the social forces are still understood as in motion and thus processes.

In fact, since social phenomena were all transient and thus processes, the concepts aiming to reflect them needed to have a temporal element and be historical. While all concepts in Gramsci's political theory were derived or abstracted from the observation of social history, some, like class, were reflections of more long-term processes while others, like social groups, were to be used in synchronic analyses.

Additionally, for Gramsci, such concepts as class, historical bloc and hegemony were dialectical in that they were simultaneously diachronic and synchronic and structural and superstructural. As discussed in our review of Gramsci's method, his concepts were also dialectical in the sense that they were both ontological (statements about reality) and methodological (statements about how to study it). With respect to political theory, Morera suggests that Gramsci's concepts were both analytical and strategic. While the concepts were both analytical and strategic, so too was the methodology of the political theory.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter will focus on the question of what Gramsci offers us, or what we can walk away with from our study of him. Here I will look at both his larger envisioned project of reconstructing Marxism and his actual reconstruction of Marxism. While in most overview discussions of the *Prison Notebooks* commentators quote Gramsci's statement that with his intellectual work in prison he wanted to leave something "for ever," for eternity, a remark taken from a letter he sent to his wife Julia's elder sister Tatiana while in prison, (Gramsci 1971, xcii) there is perhaps a more insightful statement as to his intentions that comes from his prison notes on the "Modern Prince." Here we find that for Gramsci, given the possibility of the Communist Party's destruction at the hands of fascist authorities, it was the task of the party's "principal cohesive element," or second element, (the first and third elements defined below) "which centralizes nationally and renders effective and powerful a complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing," to "leave as its heritage a ferment from which it may be recreated." (Gramsci 1971, 153) Here the dual nature of the word "ferment" can be understood either metaphorically as a "living organism that causes fermentation by virtue of its enzymes" or literally as a period or "process of active, often disorderly development" that paves the way for transformation. (Webster's 456-457)

Gramsci continued "And where could this ferment better be formed and subsist than in the first and third elements [the mass element and the intermediate element respectively], which, obviously, are the nearest in character to the second?" Gramsci asserted that it was a fundamental charge of the second element to create such a "ferment." He concluded these remarks with the statement "Since defeat in struggle must always be envisaged, the preparation of one's own successors is as important as what one does for victory." (Gramsci 1971, 153) Given the limited opportunities for

political activity and political education that Gramsci found during the last years of his life in prison, the *Prison Notebooks* must be understood as his contribution to leaving behind such a “ferment.” While they may not have been of immediate use to the Italy of his day and age, they remain a valuable “ferment” for those that operate both within and external to the Marxist tradition. While arguably Lenin’s key text was *What is to be Done*, written before the revolution, Gramsci’s key text was his *Prison Notebooks*, written after its failure.

The *Prison Notebooks* were absolutely a reflection upon a failed attempt at revolution. As such they contain a summary of what Gramsci considered to be the major political and intellectual lessons of the decade following the War. While he covered a wide array of issues in these notebooks, arguably Gramsci focused on both the need for and role of a Communist Party (sometimes discussed in terms of a core of organic intellectuals) and the project of a systematic treatment of Marxism that contributed to its autonomous development.

While the former of these concerns could be seen as a product of his own reconstructed Marxism, in particular its method and political theory, the latter concern is what I have called his envisioned project of reconstructing Marxism. While most appropriate from Gramsci various bits of his political theory, and Morera alerts us to the richness of his general historical method, both of which taken together can be conceptualized as Gramsci’s actual reconstructed Marxism, it is possible to see in his work a general perspective and guidelines for a much more comprehensive project of reconstructing Marxism.

As such Gramsci offered not just a model for how to reconstruct Marxism, in terms of his own understanding of the Marxist method and political theory, but also a proposal for a larger project too. This insight offers us clues as to how he got to his

understanding of Marx or his own reconstructed Marxism, as well as suggesting tasks beyond the scope of Gramsci's work, an unfinished project.

In many ways a significant part of the model that Gramsci offers us is his struggle with and appropriation from the Marxist tradition itself. For Gramsci the state of Marxism involved not only the revisionist currents, but also what he considered to be the sources of positive instruction or inspiration and the state in which Marx left his work. Marxism as it stood included not just where Marx had left it but also what had been done to it since – both positive and negative, both advance or development and regression, by both adherents and detractors.

In many ways Gramsci combated the dual revision of Marxism (a term he borrowed from Labriola), by referencing what he considered positive examples within the tradition of reconstructing Marxism. He referenced the example of the revolutionary success of Lenin and the Bolsheviks to challenge the prevailing determinism of the Second International and PSI.³⁶ He referenced Labriola's work to suggest the way forward with a Reconstruction of Marxism that was autonomous from and independent of bourgeois influences.³⁷

While as shown, for Gramsci it was essential to recognize the distinction between Marxist science and doctrine, and the fundamental role of method in the reconstruction of the Marxist perspective, in his own life the development of method and political theory were simultaneous acts. Yet in his *Prison Notebooks* discussion of how to conduct a systematic treatment of Marxism, or what I call his envisioned project of reconstructing Marxism, the focus on and full development of its underlying method had to precede the full development of economic and political theory. For an

³⁶ This can be interestingly compared with the way in which the Russian Revolution was the inspiration for the origins of Marxism in China.

³⁷ While Gramsci was exposed early on to Labriola's Marxism, a Marxism in which the emphasis was placed on the dialectic between theory and practice, he didn't seem to mention this aspect of Labriola's insights until his prison writings when he arrived at the necessity of a systematic treatment of Marxism.

example of what happens when Marxists fail to heed the positive model set by Gramsci and those who came before and after him, we now turn to an investigation of Michael Burawoy's Sociological Marxism.

CHAPTER 4

MICHAEL BURAWOY

“When I denounced these fellows at the Hague Conference I knew I was letting myself in for unpopularity, calumny etc.; but such consequences have always been a matter of indifference to me. Here and there it is beginning to be realized that in making that denunciation I was only doing my duty.”³⁸ (Marx 1953)

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore a more recent, even contemporary, effort at reconstructing Marxism. The effort chosen is Michael Burawoy’s project of reconstructing Marxism, the product of which he calls a Sociological Marxism. Here Burawoy stands in as one of many examples of contemporary efforts to rejuvenate Marxism.

There are a number of reasons to select Burawoy’s effort as a focus for the final chapter of this thesis. First, he is a prominent scholar in the academic field from which this thesis originates. Second, as past president of American Sociological Association (ASA), he raised the call for what has become a movement for a Public Sociology. Third, while Burawoy’s work calling for a Public Sociology has received much attention in the discipline, about the same time as this call he made another much less noticed or celebrated call for a Sociological Marxism.³⁹ Fourth, he is a contemporary and allows us to look at another moment of reconstruction besides

³⁸ Marx, here, in a 1874 letter to Kugelmann discussed the need to combat bourgeois leadership and influence in the English labor movement. (Dutt 1963, 112)

³⁹ Perhaps the lack of attention to this call has to do with the declining prevalence of Marxists in the sociological discipline, or the lack of real familiarity with Marx and Marxism that characterizes the field. Perhaps had Burawoy called for a Marxist Sociology he would have attracted more attention within the discipline. Apparently he has not attracted significant attention from outside the discipline in the Marxist tradition either.

Gramsci's. Fifth, while a contemporary in the sense that we inhabit the same world and time period, in another perhaps more significant sense he is of an earlier generation in the sense that both he and Gramsci refer to generations.

Sixth, what attracted me to Burawoy's work is the same thing that he suggests attracts new generations to Marxism as a whole – its compelling heuristics.

(Burawoy 1990, 792) It was his drawing attention to these heuristics and their relationship to historical challenges that interested me in his first article, written in 1990. It was his discussion of the work of each new generation and the need for biography and context to understand the works of intellectuals that interested me in his second piece.

Seventh, and finally, while these principles or directives were attractive I came to see that Burawoy's work fell short of its objectives. It did not sufficiently execute the principles it espoused. While I will focus on the second article, I will note some aspects of its relationship to the first. In all his flaws he provides a nice target for a polemic that allows me to synthesize what I've learned in this thesis as a whole. Burawoy provides a useful counterpoint with which to clarify what has been learned in this project. As such this chapter on Burawoy is both the last section of the thesis body and the beginning of the thesis conclusion.

Additionally, this chapter is a bridge to today. Arguably, the task today is for a conception of Marxism that will be useful not only in the academy but also in emergent social movements. Burawoy's focus seems to be on the first with the hopes that it will be of use to the latter, albeit from an extrinsic position.

The organization or structure of this chapter proceeds as follows. After a brief review of Burawoy's project, the chapter focuses on what are considered the two main aspects of this project. First the chapter looks at the narrative, historical foundations or path through which Burawoy arrives at or frames his conception of Sociological

Marxism. Second, the chapter takes a more involved though still brief or cursory look at Burawoy's Sociological Marxism.

With respect to the first of these two sections, I start with a discussion of what I consider to be the methodological flaws that underpin a series of substantive misinterpretations that stack on top of each other one after another. Then I proceed to explore Burawoy's specific interpretations of Marx, the Second International (or the early moments of the Marxist lineage following Marx and Engels), Lenin and Gramsci. I end this section by looking at Burawoy's interpretation and use of Lukacs and Polanyi. While Lukacs and Polanyi have valuable insights, Burawoy justifies his utilization of them on the basis of a series of preceding misinterpretations.

The second section looks directly at Burawoy's notion of a Sociological Marxism. It involves a discussion of its component parts, some critical issues that emerge as part of these component parts, other challenges which Burawoy raises separately and his stated purpose of or role for Sociological Marxism. This section ends with a discussion of the intellectual and political implications of Burawoy's Sociological Marxism.

Burawoy's Project

The discussion of Burawoy's project of reconstructing Marxism must start at least in part from his location in academia discussed briefly in the preceding section. As with all the other intellectuals referred to in this thesis, his location influences his project.

Burawoy attributes his call for a reconstruction of Marxism and his particular Sociological Marxism to a number of sources, both historical and more contemporary. In many ways for Burawoy the need for a reconstruction of Marxism has existed since its inception. This need can be traced to what Burawoy considers the congenital

defect of determinism present in Marx's work itself. Such an interpretation is quite prevalent in introductory sociology classes and even graduate level sociological theory seminars.

Next, and perhaps his most insightful point on the need for a reconstruction of Marxism, is how a sociology that was in crisis in the 1960s incorporated the best of what Marxism had to offer. For Burawoy, the result was that over the next couple decades such appropriation "energized sociology" while it simultaneously "blunted Marxism's critical edge." (Burawoy 2003, 196)

Here Burawoy is reminiscent of Gramsci, though he doesn't so attribute such a formulation, who spoke of how absorption had been at the root of the revisions to Marxism. Gramsci referred to how aspects of Marxism had been absorbed but also how Marxism had absorbed certain elements as well. The distinction though is that where Gramsci warned against absorption Burawoy argues for it. Perhaps the difference can be attributed to their different locations. Burawoy sitting atop the sociological profession at one of its preeminent departments and as a past chair of its professional association and Gramsci a one time promising university student, who like Marx, left the academy for a grassroots revolutionary intellectual life.

Finally, Burawoy also attributes his call for a reconstruction of Marxism and his particular Sociological Marxism to the crisis that Marxism entered in the 1990s with the "disintegration of communism, the global ascendancy of market fundamentalism, and the retreat of protest and revolution." (Burawoy 2003, 197) Burawoy continues that "together they shattered what was left of the Marxist optimism of the 1970s." (Burawoy 2003, 197)

The thing that is interesting to note in all of this is that while many who call for the reconstruction of Marxism look to prevailing forms of Marxism and their limitations, and Burawoy does this some in his earlier 1990 article, where he refers to

the problems of both analytical and post-Marxism, in this second article Burawoy speaks only of a vague and abstract Marxism. There is no reference in Burawoy's 2003 work to any specific contending or rival interpretations of Marx or the Marxist lineage. Perhaps prevailing or dominant interpretations of Marxism, as Burawoy's can be understood within mainstream sociology, don't have to refer to their challengers. In any event, rather than referring to the flaws in or limitations of specific prevailing forms or interpretations of Marxism, the basis of the stated need for his project refers to a Marxism in general that has yet to once and for all heal itself of its congenital flaw or make a break with its determinist origins and early years.

In fact, not only doesn't he refer to specific prevailing forms or interpretations of Marxism, he doesn't refer to his own efforts in this regard. While I'm not aware of any academic obligation for a scholar to reference his own work, in this case it seems that even a footnote would be appropriate as there is so much in the later article that builds on the former article in either a direct or indirect sense. Additionally, the former was not an unpublished manuscript, but rather an article written in *American Sociological Review*, the premier or flagship journal of the profession. There is however not only continuity but also discontinuity between the two pieces and it is most likely on the basis of this discontinuity that Burawoy chooses not to reference the earlier work. Such discontinuity between the two pieces, while not the focus here, will as already has been the case surface throughout the chapter.

In his 2003 article Burawoy ostensibly takes up the task that he left off with in 1990. He argues for a new branch of Marxism, Sociological Marxism, that will be adequate to meet the theoretical and practical needs of the 21st Century. His approach is to suggest that just as the field of sociology has borrowed from Marxism over its history, today it is time for Marxism to borrow from sociology. In particular Marxism will benefit from appropriating for its own use the concept of society, a concept

missing from the conceptual framework of most of the Marxist tradition. However the key here is that while it is missing from most of the tradition it can be found in some of that tradition, thus allowing Marxism to learn from sociology the utility of the concept of society while drawing from select branches of its own tradition the means to incorporate the concept of society into its conceptual framework. Here Burawoy focuses on the parallel but complimentary contributions of Gramsci and Polanyi (the latter uniquely and boldly situated by Burawoy in the Marxist camp), both of whom incorporate the concept of society into their understanding of the dynamics of capitalism and the fight for socialism in such a way so as to respond to and challenge what Burawoy considers the determinism of Marx and the Second International, what Burawoy abstracts as classical Marxism.

Burawoy does all of this through the following steps. He reviews the mutual confrontation and learning that has characterized the relationship between sociology and Marxism, he reviews Gramsci and Polanyi's personal biographies so as to understand how they each came to Marxism and developed their unique understandings of Marxism, he situates Gramsci and Polanyi in the Marxist lineage, he contrasts their Marxisms with the Marxisms that had come before and in so doing shows how together they suggest the foundations for what he labels as Sociological Marxism. Finally, he shows how this Sociological Marxism, with the concept of society placed prominently in its conceptual arsenal, both resolves and thus transcends what he considers the determinist limitation of historical Marxism. Sociological Marxism is characterized by a determinism of limits and possibilities as opposed to a determinism of economic, social and political inevitability. According to Burawoy it is just such a Sociological Marxism that is thus well suited for the particular historical challenges and demands that confront progressive movements in the 21st Century.

Methodological Flaws Underpinning Burawoy's Substantive Misinterpretations

This section explores the methodological flaws (in terms of how to study intellectuals) that underpin Burawoy's substantive misinterpretations of Marx and the Marxist lineage. An exploration of the substantive misinterpretations that are at the foundation of Burawoy's project of reconstructing Marxism will take place in the next several sections.

On the basis of work done in this thesis we have arrived at five methodological criteria for studying an intellectual's work. First, take into account the intellectual's biography or context (economic, political, ideological and intellectual). Second, on a related point, acknowledge that polemical struggles are often a major part of an intellectual's context. Failure to read the significance of these polemical struggles into the areas of research focused upon by a particular intellectual risks confusing the amount of focus they give something, often due to political considerations, with a theoretical significance they do not. Third, look at the entirety of their life's work (and the dominant activity of that work where applicable). Fourth, make the explicit distinction between method and theory. Fifth, with this explicit distinction in mind, and all the previous criteria attended to, identify the intellectual's methodological and theoretical leitmotifs.

While these criteria have been spoken to in the chapters on Marx (via Ollman and Walker's work) and Gramsci (in particular via Gramsci's own discussion of how to study Marx), it will be useful here to look at Burawoy's own acknowledgement of the first and fourth. Below I'll begin with the fourth criterion before turning to the first criterion. It is on the basis of Burawoy's own methodological comments that a critique of Burawoy can be understood as at least in part an immanent critique.

In his 1990 article Burawoy touches on the fourth criterion when he raises the issue of considering Marx's method of theory development. Burawoy suggests that to

be effective Marxists need to maintain the “integrity of Marxism’s distinctive heuristics while being responsive to the world it [seeks] to change.” (Burawoy 1990, 790) Said another way, for Burawoy Marxists need to be aware of and employ both internal history (Marxism’s heuristics of theoretical growth) and external history (the historical challenges that spur theoretical growth). Yet since his discussion is distorted by its reliance on Imre Lakatos’ model of scientific research programs⁴⁰, in particular its understanding of theories as predictions as opposed to guides to research and action, and since in his 2003 article Burawoy no longer discusses Marxism’s distinctive heuristics in any form, not much more can be gained from Burawoy on the issue of method for our present purposes.⁴¹

With respect to the first of the methodological criteria, suggested above, for studying an intellectual’s work, Burawoy gives an excellent statement.

“Reaching beyond the polemical battles of their times, which make them look superficially different, I reinsert their theories back into their political biographies. Too often the writings of Gramsci and Polanyi have been ravaged like the carcasses of dead bodies – the most useful parts ripped from their meaning-giving integument and transplanted into ailing theories. I intend to restore these two bodies of theory in their totality and as they relate to one another. That requires exploring the economic, political, and ideological context that gave meaning to their parallel life projects. For these two figures their engagement with historical forces is inseparable from their theoretical development.

⁴⁰ Burawoy draws upon Imre Lakatos’s model of research programs which consist of both a negative heuristic or hard core (core theory) and a positive heuristic or new belts of elaborating and exemplary theories (auxiliary theories). While the negative heuristic or core theory was understood as including the “assumptions and questions that define the program,” (Burawoy 1990, 778) the positive heuristic was understood as theories that served as exemplars or models of theorizing. Essentially, for Burawoy Marxism’s negative heuristic or hard core is the general theory of historical materialism as expressed in Marx’s *Preface*. For Burawoy, much of the rest of Marx’s works, his economic and political writings, falls into the category of the positive heuristic or auxiliary theories and can be seen as the elaboration of his core theory as it applies to capitalism. Despite its flaws, in particular its understanding of theories as predictions as opposed to guides to research and action, Burawoy’s use of this model in drawing attention to the issue of a research program’s assumptions, questions and exemplars for theorizing did explicitly raise the issue of method.

⁴¹ Yet, as will be seen, despite the lack of an explicit discussion of method, in Burawoy’s conception of Marx’s work there is an implicit conception of method.

Biography is therefore not some background filler but essential to grasping the integrity of their thought.” (Burawoy 2003, 201)

The issue that now remains is to show how Burawoy in failing to follow these five criteria, two of which he at least in part recognizes, misinterprets Marx and various Marxists who followed him. The next several sections focus on this task.

Misinterpretation of Marx

Burawoy doesn't take into account these criteria of research when it comes to his treatment of Marx, the originator of the tradition. While many who discuss the need for a reconstruction of Marxism focus the bulk of their intellectual labor on a systematic treatment of Marx with minor references to other moments in the lineage (and in particular mainly on their negative impact on Marxism), Burawoy deals cursorily with Marx, spending most of his time on either the lineage as a whole or select moments in it. While I'll look at Burawoy's interpretation of this lineage in the next several sections, here I focus on his interpretation of its origins in Marx.

Here he fails to look at all at Marx's biography, or his economic, political, and ideological context, a context that gave meaning to his life project. He fails to acknowledge that polemical struggles were a major part of Marx's context. In failing to read the significance of these polemical struggles into the issues Marx chose to focus his studies upon, in particular political economy, Burawoy confuses the amount of focus Marx gave these issues with a theoretical significance he did not. He fails to look at the entirety of Marx's work, both literary and practical. He fails to make an explicit distinction between Marx's method and Marx's theory.

Burawoy has no discussion of the state Marx left his work in (unlike Gramsci and Ollman for whom this is an essential point), the subjects Marx focused his efforts on and why, the real innovation of Marx's work relative to German philosophy,

French political theory and practice and English Political Economy, and the real contribution of Marx's work to the working class movement given the issues with which it struggled in his day.

By not looking at Marx's biography or context, by not considering the significance of Marx's polemical struggles, by looking solely at some works and not others⁴², and by not explicitly distinguishing between Marx's method and his theory, Burawoy arrives at what he considers to be the core of Marx's work, what he calls Marx's theory of the transition from capitalism to communism. (Burawoy 2003, 208)

For Burawoy this theory rested on the coincidence in time and space of three processes. First "capitalism by virtue of its own systematic logic sows the seeds of its own destruction," arriving at its final crisis. (Burawoy 2003, 208) Second, this deepening crisis leads to social polarization, an automatic increase in class-consciousness and thus the inevitable production of a revolutionary working class, and the resulting intensification of the class struggle. Third, capitalism spontaneously creates the conditions of socialism, by which Burawoy seems to imply socialism itself and not just the material basis of socialism. (Burawoy 2003, 209-210)

Yet in this three-part formulation Burawoy boils all of Marx's work down from some unstated sources to a theoretical systematization that Marx never constructed.⁴³ He then charges this self-constructed theory as flawed on the basis of an inherent inevitability or determinism. Yet it is with just this charge that Burawoy begins to get implicitly at the issue of method. While Burawoy makes no explicit remarks on Marx's method, his obsession with the determinism of Marx's work, while explicitly focused on a theoretical level, is implicitly operating on a methodological level.

⁴² Unlike his 1990 article where he offers a number of references, in his 2003 article Burawoy doesn't even cite any references for what he constructs as the theoretical core of Marx's work.

⁴³ It's interesting to note that he does cite sources of those Marxists he uses to rebut this determinism.

Yet here Burawoy does exactly what both Gramsci and Morera caution against. Gramsci cautions against systematizing Marx before arriving at Marx's inherent or essential coherence. This is exactly what Burawoy does with his theoretical systematization of Marx before arriving at an appreciation of his dialectic. In fact the concept of dialectics doesn't factor explicitly into Burawoy's discussion at all. On a related if not the same point, Morera cautions against failing to fully take into account an intellectual's underpinning method when formulating or constructing interpretations of his or her specific theories (economic for Marx and political for Gramsci). This too is exactly what Burawoy does when he formulates Marx's theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism without a thorough investigation of Marx's dialectical method.

On the basis of these methodological missteps Burawoy lacks the requisite interpretive leverage and thus fails to accurately interpret what can be considered Marx's methodological leitmotif, a leitmotif which contrary to Burawoy's interpretation is in fact captured or expressed in what were Marx's actual theories, in particular his theory of historical materialism.

And it is with respect to methodological leitmotif that Lenin and Gramsci help us in disagreeing most vehemently with Burawoy. Indeed, for Lenin, who suggests that Marx can't be understood without an appreciation of Hegel, the leitmotif is seen as dialectics. For Gramsci the leitmotif is seen as an epistemological dialectic and historical dialectic or historical necessity. As discussed in both the Marx and Gramsci chapters, inherent in Marx's dialectical method was a critique of the determinism of both traditional materialism and bourgeois political economy. Essentially Burawoy constructs a strawman of Marx that he then criticizes as determinist. Gramsci cautions against thinking one is criticizing historical materialism while one is really criticizing historical economism. (Gramsci 1971, 163) This is exactly what Burawoy does when

he charges Marx with determinism but really is critiquing the Second International's interpretation of Marx to which I will turn shortly.

First I'll look in a little more detail at what Burawoy calls the three legs of Marx's theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Here it will be useful to keep in mind how the Marx and Gramsci chapters of this thesis revealed dialectics as Marx's methodological leitmotif. With respect to leg number one, Burawoy synthesizes all of Marx's economics into the prediction that there would be a final crisis of capitalism. McLellan helps us in pointing out that the problem with this statement is that Marx's understanding of the economics of capitalism was a much more nuanced and contingent understanding than this. (McLellan 1971a, 122-126) Ollman suggests that for Marx the laws of capital existed on a level of abstraction that abstracted out the other historical influences but that when seen or placed in more concrete levels of abstraction they were counteracted by more concrete historical features, processes and forces. As has been seen and will be returned to shortly, Gramsci, in a similar vein, attributed his own understanding of how to analyze situations and the concept of historical necessity to Marx. Gramsci also spoke to how to abstract his laws by isolating tendencies.

With respect to leg number two, while Marx failed to predict the effect of either imperialism or democracy on the working class movement (in both its objective stratified class structure and its subjective reformist consciousness), he never suggested that the class struggle would automatically intensify or that the workers' class-consciousness would automatically develop. As the *Communist Manifesto* and the whole of his work suggested, Marx emphasized the role of the communists and the communist party. If Marx thought it was inevitable that class struggle would just intensify towards the seizure of power, then why did he take the time he did to do all the immense intellectual work and polemics that were a part of this? Clearly Marx

was engaged in a fight for the direction, content and success of the revolutionary movement of his time. There was no assumption, claim or sterile removed prediction of the transition, but an engaged, intellectually, ideologically and politically demanding effort to develop a strategy for how to secure the future, not just see if it happened.

Finally with respect to leg number three, in general it can be seen that while Marx held that there was a maturing of the material conditions of socialism in the womb of capitalism, his claim to the inevitability of this transition always took into account the critical role of humans acting collectively, something that could not be taken for granted but that had to be secured by revolutionaries organized in a party. Marx's statements as to what would happen in the social and political realms necessitated the fierce and determined struggle on the part of communists and Marxists. Its outcome along lines predicted was contingent upon the political and ideological forms they employed.

While in his 2003 article Burawoy doesn't reference the source of these three aspects of Marx's theory, in his 1990 article he gives us a clue as to from where he derives at least the first two. He attributes the first to Marx's *Capital* which according to Burawoy offers us a theory of the dynamics of capitalism, culminating with the inevitability of its demise. According to Burawoy the theory suggests that capitalism's competitive pressures lead individual capitalists to increase profits through whatever means available. In addition to reducing wages, extending the length of the working day and intensifying work Burawoy suggests that the theory draws attention to the development and implementation of new technologies as the most efficient means of increasing profits. Yet as other capitalists pursue similar means there is a dual crisis of the falling rate of profit and the overproduction of commodities. Burawoy asserts that according to the theory, the aggregate effect of

individual capitalists pursuing profits is the bringing about of the economic demise of capitalism.

In this 1990 article Burawoy more or less attributes the second of the theory's elements, the inevitable polarization of the class structure between capital and labor, and the automatic increase in consciousness of the working class through such forms as trade unions and a working class party that seizes state power, to the *Communist Manifesto*. Yet the extreme confidence in the inevitable and close at hand demise of capitalism and the success of the working class in its revolutionary struggle that Burawoy attributes to Marx was contingent on the class's political activity. The *Communist Manifesto* was not a prediction so much as a program and guide to action.

In many ways one could argue that rather than abstracting this theory from these sources, Burawoy uses these sources to justify sociology's long-standing interpretation of Marx. In this regard, the brilliance of Burawoy's synthesis is not that he makes explicit a theory that is implicit in Marx's work but rather that he synthesizes the many interpretations of Marx that have existed within mainstream sociology and that are more similar to the Second International's interpretation of Marx than Marx himself.

In a sense, based on what appears to be a cursory review of Marx, Burawoy constructs a theoretical synthesis of Marx's work and then charges it with the methodological flaw of determinism. What this section of the chapter argues is that a systematic treatment of the entirety of Marx's work, placed in the context of his biography and context, with particular attention to the reasons for the polemical struggles in which he engaged (*Capital* included as part of such polemical struggles), would identify the methodological (both the ontological and epistemological) leitmotiv of Marx's works as being one of dialectics with a qualified determinism, or

dialectical determinism, as opposed to the full blown reductionist determinism that Burawoy asserts.

Misinterpretation of Second International

While the previous section challenged Burawoy's flawed interpretation of Marx, in particular his implicit flawed take on the methodological leitmotiv and thus his explicit flawed take on the theoretical leitmotiv of Marx's work, this section holds onto his interpretation of Marx only so long as is required to explore how it sets the basis of his flawed narrative of the lineage.

For Burawoy the three coincident processes of Marx's theory of the transition from capitalism to socialism became the three foundational claims of Classical Marxism. It was to these determinist claims that Marxists after Marx responded. In particular their response was provoked by the fact that history did not seem to validate Marx's predictions. Capitalism did not seem to be ending and the working class did not seem to be displaying its anticipated revolutionary zeal.

At this point Burawoy draws our attention to the German Marxists Rosa Luxemburg, Eduard Bernstein and Karl Kautsky. Burawoy suggests that while Luxemburg saw that in fact a revolutionary situation had emerged by WWI and this thus required a more revolutionary politics on the part of the working class, Kautsky suggested the final crisis had not yet arrived and that a patient building up of the working class's strength was required while waiting for capitalism to exhaust its potential. Contra to both Luxemburg and Kautsky, who operated within the parameters of Marx's claims, Bernstein revised these claims by suggesting that there was no inevitability to the collapse of capitalism, that revolution was neither desirable or inevitable, and that capitalism would actually evolve into socialism.

Thus, for Burawoy, historical events had pointed out the problems of the determinism inherent in Marx's theories. While the Second International had tried unsuccessfully to deal with this determinism, Lenin and Lukacs were able to begin making the break and Gramsci and Polanyi completed this break. This section will focus in the main on the Second International while the next sections will focus on Lenin and Gramsci, and Lukacs and Polanyi respectively.

While Burawoy accepts the prevalent yet problematic determinist interpretation of Marx, he attempts to identify within the tradition efforts to break free of this interpretation of Marx. He thus seeks to challenge the dismissal of Marxism as a whole by proving the continued viability of a reconstructed or what he calls Sociological Marxism for today.

As has been shown it is equally possible, more accurate, and politically more advantageous, to challenge the determinist interpretation of Marx head on.⁴⁴ On the basis of such a counter interpretation of Marx we arrive at a very different narrative of the lineage which follows him. The point of focus is not on how confronted by historical challenges to Marx's theories later Marxists attempted to correct Marx and revise Marxism, but rather on how confronted by historical challenges to the movement and the failure of prevailing interpretations of Marxism to address these challenges, some Marxists returned to Marx and reappropriated his method so as to develop the new doctrines suitable to the situations they faced. Seen in this light, for Lenin and Gramsci the Second International didn't see Marx's dialectic, only an alleged determinism. As discussed in the Gramsci chapter, it was this confusion that underpinned the Second International's failure to understand their role, as organic intellectuals, of shaping will and contributing to the formation of a counter-hegemony.

⁴⁴ As seen, this can be done by using some of the very techniques for studying an intellectual's work that not only Gramsci and Ollman, but also Burawoy himself suggests.

At this point we can comment briefly on Burawoy's discussion of Luxemburg. While a thorough review of her life and work is beyond the scope of this thesis, it seems necessary to comment briefly on how most interpretations of the revisionist debate within the Second International place Luxemburg's participation and contribution towards the end of this debate, in a sense an anti-revisionist precursor of Lenin and Gramsci's work. In this sense she appeared hostile to the positions of both Bernstein and Kautsky. (McLellan 1979, 42-56)

While for Burawoy revisionism seems to dwindle in significance given the economic determinism inherent in Marx's work and the conclusion that the Second International as a whole remained stuck in that determinism, for Luxemburg, Lenin and Gramsci this revisionism was the main problem. Indeed, as seen, Gramsci employed Labriola who identified the dual nature of the revisionism, both idealist and economic determinist. Additionally, Gramsci's discussion of the economic revisionism that underpinned both the right and left wings of the working class movement helps us to see, contra Burawoy, that revisionism underpinned the work of both Bernstein, the classic revisionist, and Kautsky, who came interestingly enough to be seen as the orthodox Marxist.

It's interesting to note that while Burawoy's three foundational claims aren't an accurate synthesis of Marx they actually may be a fairly accurate synthesis of the Second International's interpretation of Marx. Here the theoretical revisionism that was present in both their interpretation of Marx as well as what they considered their own original theoretical affirmations was rooted in an underlying methodological revisionism that Gramsci alluded to. While they responded in different ways to what amounted to their own flawed interpretation of Marx, their efforts were equally constrained by their own underlying methodological revisionism.

Looking at the Second International in its full context we can understand some of the reasons for why this may have been the case. First, what Marx had focused on in the later part of his life in particular could have given the impression that the economy was solely determinant. Arguably, because of his early preoccupation with utopian socialism and his later preoccupation with an adventurist socialism and anarchism Marx focused on political economy and did not take the time to work out a systematic and accessible treatment of either his method or his political theory. Second, McLellan suggests that the understanding of Marxism in the Second International was very low. (McLellan 1979, 20-22) In particular there was no familiarity with the origins of Marxism in the German philosophical tradition and thus no real familiarity with the nature of Marx's appropriation of the dialectic. (On this basis, contrary to Gramsci, it makes sense to separate Plekhanov from the mainstream of the Second International for he did suggest the need to look at the origins of Marxism and on this basis appreciated the role of the individual in history in the context of a conception of necessity.) Third, as Lenin suggested, the expanding world capitalist economy (discussed by Lenin in his study of imperialism) provided the material basis for a bribed and thus reformist European working class movement that subscribed readily to the politics of what became known as social democracy and thus gave material boost to Bernstein's revisionist Marxism in the Second International.

As seen in our earlier study of him, Gramsci, in his envisioned project for the reconstruction of Marxism, suggested that the project involved both the systematic treatment of Marx as well as the utilization of the later Marxists Labriola and Lenin in this regard. In some ways Ollman reviewed earlier and Burawoy reviewed here take up the two different pieces of Gramsci's charge. While Burawoy's contemporary Ollman focuses almost exclusively on Marx in his reconstruction of Marxism, Burawoy draws our attention towards the second aspect of Gramsci's directive.

Dealing only cursorily with Marx, Burawoy focuses his attention on the utilization of the lineage after Marx. However, whereas for Gramsci the utilization of the lineage was to see how people dealt with misinterpretations of Marx, for Burawoy the attention he directs towards the lineage is about how people tried to correct Marx. Thus while fundamentally flawed in his treatment of both Marx and in his understanding of the lineage, Burawoy provides us with an opportunity to integrate not just a familiarity but a study and mastery of the lineage into our own efforts at reconstructing Marxism.

Misinterpretation of Lenin and Gramsci

The previous section discussed how Burawoy's misinterpretation of the origins of the Marxist lineage sets the stage for his flawed narrative of the lineage. Rather than a narrative that begins with the contribution of Marx's revolutionary and innovative perspective to the working class movement (in philosophy, methodology, political economy and political theory and doctrine), then looks at problematic revisions to this perspective, and concludes with attempts to reconstruct the original perspective, Burawoy's narrative is about a tradition flawed from its inception, with the initial post-conception moments of the lineage trapped within this flaw and later moments able to break free. Rather than a lineage fighting to reclaim and make prevalent the dialectic (method), Burawoy's narrative is about a tradition trying to break free of what had been an inherent and congenital determinism.

Thus Burawoy approaches Lenin and Gramsci from the mistaken vantage point of this flawed narrative. Here I will first give a brief summary of Burawoy's interpretation of both Lenin and Gramsci's break with classical Marxism and then offer a critique of this interpretation. In particular I identify two major interpretive flaws when it comes to Burawoy on Lenin and Gramsci. First, Burawoy misinterprets

who or what Lenin and Gramsci were trying to make a break from. Second, and on the basis of the first misinterpretation, Burawoy misinterprets the nature of their break or what becomes their trajectory.

As already suggested, in his move to a discussion of Lenin Burawoy turns his attention to what he considers the first step of the lineage's break from Marx's determinism. For Burawoy, against classical Marxism Lenin suggested that "capitalism [did] not enter into a final crisis," (Burawoy 2003, 210) but rather, based on his economic analysis, it had reconstituted itself into a new stage called imperialism. Against classical Marxism Lenin suggested "capitalism [did] not inherently produce a revolutionary working class," (Burawoy 2003, 210) but rather this required the effort of a vanguard party. Against classical Marxism Lenin suggested "the passage to socialism [could not] be automatic." (Burawoy 2003, 210) For Lenin the passage could only "be the result of a deliberate, collective effort" that required the "destruction of the capitalist state and then the construction of a new form of state, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." (Burawoy 2003, 210) Burawoy summarizes what he considers Lenin's break with classical Marxism as follows. "Without laws to guarantee the automatic demise of capitalism, Lenin [turned] his attention to politics and ideology and thereby [anticipated] a Sociological Marxism." (Burawoy 2003, 210) It is exactly at this place that Burawoy introduces what he considers to be Gramsci's break with classical Marxism.

With respect to Gramsci Burawoy is more explicit as to from what or whom Gramsci made his break. For Burawoy Gramsci was critical of the orthodox German Marxism of his time. Referring to Gramsci's article "Revolution Against *Capital*" Burawoy interprets the young Gramsci as taking the Russian Revolution as an act of defiance of Marx's historical laws, laws that had been "the crutch of inaction for so many contemporary Marxists." (Burawoy 2003, 203) For Burawoy the Bolsheviks

had facilitated the young Gramsci's rejection of Marxism as a scientific doctrine and acceptance of Marxism as a "powerful ideology, a concrete fantasy that could capture the imagination of subaltern classes, galvanizing their collective will to bring history under their direction." (Burawoy 2003, 203)

For Burawoy, while the Russian Revolution had inspired the young Gramsci's break with classical Marxism, the subsequent decade of political experience in the Italian working class movement, and in particular its defeat at the hands of the bourgeois state and fascism, was equally influential for the mature Gramsci. Burawoy asserts that this chaotic and ultimately tragic decade led Gramsci away from his conception of Marxism as ideology and towards a conception of Marxism as science. Gramsci's Marxism became more deterministic in that it now would seek to "comprehend the limits of the possible, the limits of class formation, the power of the state and ideology, and the sources of spontaneous consent to capitalism." (Burawoy 2003, 205)

Burawoy suggests that while Lenin had dealt well with the "world in which he was engaged," Gramsci historicized Lenin's theory to deal with what he considered to be the "distinctiveness of the West." Here Gramsci identified a strong civil society that was found in advanced capitalism but not in Russia. According to Burawoy, for Gramsci this civil society created "obstacles to the mission of the vanguard party." He continues that it orchestrated "the coordination of interests between capital and labor" and deepened "bourgeois democracy's power to domesticate revolutionary tendencies." As Burawoy suggests, Gramsci thus "[thematized] the significance of society – a concept entirely absent in Lenin – for the prosecution of revolution." (Burawoy 2003, 211)

Burawoy suggests that since Gramsci, like Lenin, did not believe in the three foundational claims of classical Marxism he too focused on politics and ideology.

However for Gramsci this focus took him to the study of how in advanced capitalism there was an “elaboration of a civil society closely connected to an expansive state.” According to Burawoy this was “Gramsci’s momentous, theoretical breakthrough.” (Burawoy 2003, 211)

The concept of society was at the heart of what Burawoy considers Gramsci’s specific challenge to each of the foundational claims of classical Marxism. Burawoy suggests that Gramsci countered the first claim of capitalism’s inevitable self-generated destruction with his conception of how “civil society [combined] with the state to absorb political challenges to capitalism.” (Burawoy 2003, 220) It thus propped up capitalism and prevented its automatic and inevitable demise. According to Burawoy, Gramsci’s conception of civil society focused on its political functions and thus relationship to the state. Relative to Lenin’s concept of the state, Gramsci’s concept of the state was both expanded (to include not only its repressive but also its ideological functions) and extended (to include civil society).

For Burawoy Gramsci countered the second claim of the intensification of the class struggle with his conception of the strength and means (civil society combined with the state) of bourgeois hegemony. Here Gramsci offered perspective for the analysis of a situation via the method of studying both the relations of force and what Burawoy calls the “levels of collective political consciousness.” (Burawoy 2003, 224)

Finally Burawoy suggests that Gramsci countered the third claim of how capitalism spontaneously created the foundations of socialism with his conception of the possibility of diverse social and political trajectories. For Gramsci three factors shaped such trajectories. First, there were “historical legacies” or “sedimentations of the past.” (Burawoy 2003, 233) Second, there were “organic crises precipitated by class struggle” (Burawoy 2003, 233) or the “balance of forces in organic crises.” (Burawoy 2003, 213) Third, there was the “reaction to pressures from international

economic and political forces,” (Burawoy 2003, 206) the “challenges nation-states posed for one another,” (Burawoy 2003, 233) or the “national models as carried by intellectuals.” (Burawoy 2003, 213) While Gramsci took a “conjunctural view of history in which alternative trajectories [were] always possible,” he viewed “all trajectories of history” from the standpoint of his “telos, an ultimate subjective goal” (Burawoy 2003, 232) or the “preferred end point, namely socialism.” (Burawoy 2003, 227)

Yet despite what Burawoy considers to be the monumental insight of Gramsci’s particular break with classical Marxism, Burawoy also is unsatisfied with Gramsci’s product. First, for Burawoy Gramsci lacked a general theory of the origins of civil society and the institutions of hegemony, or said another way, an understanding of the general mechanisms leading to the expansion and extension of the modern state. Second, for Burawoy Gramsci lacked a viable theory as to the grounds for or basis of the working class’ counter-hegemony. Gramsci lacked a sense of how the working class could achieve a counter-hegemonic position given what would be its obvious difficulty in presenting its interests as universal, its lack of material resources that were the basis of material concessions to potential allies, and the weakness of the Communist Party as an institutional basis of hegemony relative to the power of the capitalist state. Burawoy is critical of what he considers to be Gramsci’s only solution to this predicament – a “productivist ideology” which most likely wouldn’t have the power to galvanize the working class let alone bind allied classes to it. (Burawoy 2003, 227) Third, and related to the first two points, for Burawoy Gramsci offered no insight into the “underlying dynamics to history.” (Burawoy 2003, 236) Here Burawoy points to how Gramsci didn’t analyze the “contradictions within the economy between forces and relations of production” as well as the fact that for Gramsci the outcome of the class struggle was “contingent on

an array of political and ideological factors.” (Burawoy 2003, 236) It appears that Burawoy, while not content with the metaphysical character of classical Marxism’s understanding of the “self-generating dynamics” of the economic structure, (Burawoy 2003, 224) is looking for some Marxist sense of the underlying dynamics, tendencies and counter-tendencies, at play in the transformations and transitions of history. (Burawoy 2003, 239)

It is from such a narrative context that Burawoy lays the basis of his turn to Lukacs and Polanyi. However, before moving onto the next section of this chapter and following Burawoy into what he considers to be an alternative trajectory from Marx, this section engages in a critique of Burawoy’s interpretation of what he calls the Lenin-Gramsci trajectory from Marx. As suggested earlier the critique focuses on the question of who or what the trajectory was breaking from and the nature of this break. Such a critique will challenge what Burawoy considers to be lacking in Gramsci and thus challenge his justification for turning to Lukacs and Polanyi.

With respect to Lenin and the question of from what or whom he was breaking, Burawoy never substantiates his interpretation that Lenin was making a break with not just the Second International but also Marx. Rather, having equated Marx with the Marxism of the Second International, and lumped the two together into the catchall classical Marxism, Burawoy seems to believe that he only has to show that Lenin was responding to the determinist claims of classical Marxism to implicitly suggest that Lenin was also responding to what he considers the determinist claims of Marx as well. However, earlier in the chapter we made the critical distinction between Marx and the Second International. This allows us to suggest that Burawoy’s discussion of Lenin’s break with the determinist claims of classical Marxism be understood as strictly a break with the Second International and not Marx.

With respect to Lenin and the form of his break Burawoy asserts that Lenin's disagreement with the conception of determinist historical laws led him to turn his attention away from economics and towards politics and ideology. Yet while Lenin surely focused on the matter of politics and ideology, as evidenced by his extensive works on the party and the state, it is necessary to look at both why he focused his attention there and what was the nature of this focus.

Lenin's focus on politics and ideology was a response to a crisis situation in Russia in which the Second International's determinist read of Marx blocked the communists from taking advantage of the revolutionary situation. Lenin was well aware, as was Marx, that socialism was something that had to be won. History abstracted from human effort did not deliver socialism to humanity on a silver platter. Thus the Second International's determinism had to be defeated.

With respect to the nature of his break and his focus on politics and ideology, it must be understood that Lenin's work remained based in the thorough analysis of capitalism through which he had arrived at the formulation that capitalism had entered a new stage – imperialism. While Burawoy adequately discusses Lenin's work on imperialism as the means through which he rebutted the determinism of the classical Marxism's first claim, he fails to incorporate this aspect of Lenin's work as the foundation of his political theory and practice. Interestingly enough, in his 1990 article Burawoy suggests that basis of Lenin's 1917 decision that the time was ripe to seize power in Russia was “not simply opportunism” but rather “like so much of Lenin's political strategy, his decision was rooted in a theoretical understanding of the decline of capitalism on a world scale, as worked out in *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* [1916].” (Burawoy 1990, 785)

In fact Burawoy's construction leaves him no room to notice how in Lenin's response to the determinism of the Second International he actually returned to and

made use of Marx's dialectics. While for Lenin there was a complete break or discontinuity with the Second International, he maintained continuity with Marx's method and the requisite discontinuity with Marx's doctrine (here meant to refer to Marx's period specific analyses and strategies for dealing with the situation he faced). In responding to the determinism of Second International, which would have preempted taking advantage of the situation, Lenin was using Marx's and his appreciation of the dialectic to analyze the new situation he faced.

Rather than go into detail on Lenin, who has not been a focus of this thesis and who is not the focus of Burawoy's efforts, this section now turns its attention to a critique of Burawoy's interpretation of Gramsci. Such a critique begins by restating briefly Burawoy's narrative.

Burawoy's misinterpretation of Gramsci has three components. He discusses who or what Gramsci broke from, the nature of this break and thus Gramsci's trajectory, and the shortcomings of this trajectory. He suggests that Gramsci broke with the determinism of classical Marxism, a category Burawoy uses to refer to not only the Second International but also Marx. Not subscribing to the determinist historical laws of classical Marxism Gramsci brought politics and ideology to the center of his work. In particular Burawoy suggests that Gramsci used the concepts of civil society and an expanded/extended state to do this. Yet having left a focus on the economic realm, and arrived at a political and ideological realm that is relatively autonomous from the economy, Burawoy suggests that Gramsci had no way of understanding the underlying structural dynamics that were the basis of both counter-hegemony and the transition from one social formation to another.

My critique of Burawoy's interpretation of Gramsci starts by critiquing Burawoy's interpretation of who or what Gramsci broke from and then, in discussing the nature of the actual break Gramsci made, shows that his trajectory and thus body

of work does not suffer from the shortcoming Burawoy suggests. I assert that Gramsci broke from the Second International's determinism and that he used Marx's dialectical method to do this. The fact that at the heart of Marx and thus Gramsci's dialectical method was an explicit focus on the relationship between structure and superstructure, or economics and politics, thus refutes Burawoy's claim that Gramsci failed to have an understanding of the structural dynamics underpinning counter-hegemony and social transformation.

I'll make this case by first looking at the early Gramsci and then turning to the later Gramsci, the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks*. While the foundations of Gramsci's trajectory can be seen in his early writings, by the *Prison Notebooks* we see a refined and clarified trajectory.

While Burawoy sees Gramsci's early article "Revolution Against *Capital*" as a statement of Gramsci's critique of and thus break with Marx, in the main Gramsci was not criticizing Marx or his work but rather how people had used Marx's work. While Gramsci did raise the issue of Marx being himself "contaminated with positivist and naturalist encrustations," (Gramsci 1994, 40) he in a soon to follow article pointed to "the sterilization of Marx's doctrines at the hands of the Positivist Socialists." (Gramsci 1994, 43) While somewhat ambiguous and ambivalent early on towards Marx, in the main in his early works he seemed more focused on critiquing those who would *use* Marx's works to "compile a rigid doctrine made up of dogmatic and unquestionable claims." (Gramsci 1994, 40) He spoke of those who "*reduced* Marx's doctrine to an abstract scheme, a kind of natural law, operating deterministically, quite outside the sphere of men's wills, of their collective activity," and the way in which "Marx's doctrine *became* the doctrine of the inertia of the proletariat." (Gramsci 1994, 44) Thus we can conclude that from the start while Gramsci was not breaking with

Marx he was breaking with the Second International for its determinist misuse of Marx.

In Gramsci's critique of the use they made of Marx he implicitly suggested an alternative use. In his very act of specifying with what and who he was breaking Gramsci clarified the means by which he made this break and thus the foundation of his actual trajectory. And here he underscored the point that his was not a break with Marx. For even in "Revolution Against *Capital*" Gramsci seemed to have an appreciation for Marx's thought. There he stated how the Bolsheviks were "living out Marxist thought." (Gramsci 1994, 40) Arguably he clarified this idea in his soon to follow article "Our Marx." There he attributed to Marx the fact that "The idols are falling from their altars, the gods are watching the clouds of perfumed incense thin out around them. Man is acquiring a new awareness of objective reality; he is mastering the secrets which govern what happens in the world." (Gramsci 1994, 56)

But clearly this was not a determinist governance because in that same piece Gramsci spoke to how due to "the establishment of the real laws of historical causality" humanity now had the possibility of "bowing to necessity," "disciplining itself to obey necessity" and thus coming "to dominate necessity itself." (Gramsci 1994, 56-57) As suggested in my Gramsci chapter, here we see that from early on Gramsci was comfortable with historical laws but not in the determinist sense that the Second International interpreted them. Rather for Gramsci structural tendencies determined only the general direction of history. Once made aware of these tendencies the masses could be influential in history. There was a clear recognition here of both the objective and subjective premises that his concept of historical necessity, written about later on in his *Prison Notebooks*, would capture more precisely.

Thus in Gramsci's discussion of what he was breaking from we see not only a rejection of Burawoy's assertion that Gramsci broke with Marx, but also a rejection of Burawoy's interpretation of Gramsci's trajectory. For Burawoy, since Gramsci broke with Marx and moved away from Marx's focus on economics to a new focus on politics he lacked an understanding of how underlying structural dynamics also factored into the outcome of situations or a particular society's trajectory. Yet Gramsci's actual trajectory, in reappropriating Marx's method, may have focused on politics, but not at the expense of its dialectical relationship with economics. In fact, in another early article, Gramsci, speaking of politics and the economy and how both the syndicalist trade unionists and reformist politicians had separated the two, suggested that "it is one of the great merits of Marxism that it has asserted this dialectical unity."⁴⁵ (Gramsci 1994, 48) Finally, while McLellan suggests that politics was of central interest to Gramsci, he makes the interesting observation that Gramsci most often spoke to or addressed the economic aspect of a situation indirectly by reference to the need for the masses to understand that aspect of the situation rather than dealing with it directly or explicitly. (McLellan 1979, 184)

Here before moving on to the more mature Gramsci we see how Burawoy who focuses on Gramsci's political theory is unable to get even this right because he fails to appreciate Gramsci's dialectics. Seeing Gramsci as breaking completely with Marx's historical laws, for Burawoy Gramsci's conception of the formation of will was strictly ideological. But since as shown there remained with Gramsci some conception of historical laws acting in history, the formation of will was actually not just ideological but intellectual as well. His concept of historical necessity took into

⁴⁵ Gramsci would in his *Prison Notebooks* speak similarly of an economism that placed too much emphasis on what he there called organic or long-term structural processes and an ideologism that placed too much emphasis on conjunctural or short-term superstructural processes.

account the masses' participation just as it kept a sense of tendencies or historical laws.

At this point we can turn to the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks*. In reviewing this mature Gramsci's take on who or what he was breaking from, the core of his trajectory and the methodological principles that flowed from this, we see more clearly the absence of what Burawoy considers as Gramsci's shortcomings.

By the time of the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci was even clearer than in his earlier writings on the target of his polemic and thus what he was breaking from. We see this in his assertion that the main obstacle to Marxism achieving its two major tasks was what Labriola called the dual revisionism it had suffered from. Gramsci suggested that the original Marxism had been revised via both having been absorbed by idealist philosophy and simultaneously having absorbed traditional materialist philosophy.

Burawoy leaves out completely Gramsci's reference to Labriola, arguably because it contradicts his case that Gramsci was dedicated to correcting the determinism of Marx and not just the Second International. However, it was by way of reference to Labriola that in his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci called for a systematic treatment of Marx, a call that Burawoy also fails to acknowledge. Such a call suggested an unequivocal admiration of and appreciation for Marx and a departure from the more ambiguous position he had towards Marx in his early writings, a position which as seen Burawoy takes as Gramsci's continued sense of Marx even in his *Prison Notebooks*.

As discussed in the previous chapter, much of what can be seen as Gramsci's call for a reconstruction of Marxism remained envisioned as opposed to actualized by Gramsci. Yet on the basis of his following certain methodological criteria that Burawoy fails to respect, in particular the need to conduct an intellectual and political

biography and a study of the entirety of Marx's work all from the vantage point of identifying the leitmotiv of his work, Gramsci articulated a conception that the leitmotiv or essential coherence of Marx's work was the dialectic. Again as discussed in the last chapter, by the term dialectic Gramsci referred to both the ontological dialectic, or historical dialectic, otherwise referred to by Gramsci as the concept of historical necessity, and the epistemological dialectic.

Gramsci's dialectical ontology can be seen in the methodological principles he derived from Marx's *Preface*. From the *Preface* Gramsci understood how society was not static but existed in motion and how this motion consisted of both organic or long-term and conjunctural or short-term processes that existed in dialectical relationship to each other. As seen in the earlier chapter, Gramsci contrasted this historical dialectic, or his concept of historical necessity, by which he referred to this relationship between structure and superstructure, organic and conjunctural processes, objective and subjective premises which determined the outcome of situations and thus the historical process itself, to the efforts of reductionist Marxists to "reduce everything to a single ultimate or final cause." (Gramsci 1971, 437)

Since Gramsci's ontology recognized the significance of not just objective but also subjective aspects of a situation, not just structural determinants but also superstructural determinants, and not just conjunctural but also organic processes, Gramsci's epistemology emphasized both the necessity of knowledge to correspond to reality so as to be effective in changing or influencing that reality as well as how as part of the reality itself, changes in knowledge thus changed reality.

With a dialectical ontology and epistemology it's not surprising that dialectics infused each element of Gramsci's methodology, from its use of the situation as a unit of analysis, to its emphasis on both diachronic and synchronic analysis, to its development and use of dialectical concepts. Arguably, it was the dialectic, which

infused every aspect of Gramsci's method, that was the main means with which Gramsci dealt with the determinism of the Second International without himself losing sight of the ultimately determining role of the economy.⁴⁶

Such a dialectical method underpinned the ability of his political theory, and in particular his political concepts, to polemicize with the determinism of the Second International's political theory. In particular, as Gramsci suggested, in the realm of political theory and action, the concept of hegemony would be used against economism. As Gramsci noted, it was "necessary to combat economism not only in the theory of historiography, but also and especially in the theory and practice of politics. In this field, the struggle can and must be carried on by developing the concept of hegemony – as has been done in practice in the development of the theory of the political party, and in the actual history of certain political parties ..." (Gramsci 1971, 165)

Burawoy suggests that at the core of Gramsci's challenge to determinism and thus his break with the Second International was his concept of civil society and the related concepts of the integral state and hegemony. However, since the determinism that Burawoy is trying to address here is at base a methodological problem, in that it flows from a conception of reality and how to study reality, his efforts, remaining at the theoretical level, are destined to be inadequate. This discussion has attempted to show that at the foundation of Gramsci's theoretical or conceptual challenge to determinism was his methodological (in an ontological and epistemological sense) challenge, in the main posed by his reappropriation of Marx's dialectic.

While Burawoy is correct that there is a certain theoretical newness to Gramsci's political concepts, contra Burawoy this theoretical or doctrinal innovation

⁴⁶ It should be kept in mind that every aspect of Gramsci's method was a polemic against not just the ultra-materialist economic determinism of the Second International, but also the idealist historicism and positivist sociology of his day.

by not only Gramsci but also Lenin remained in fundamental continuity with Marx's method. Gramsci's theories, analyses and strategies were in the requisite discontinuity with Marx's doctrine. Marx and Engels themselves at the end of their lives urged the communists of different countries to make accurate assessments of their respective situations. This was a crucial element of the brilliance of Lenin that underpinned his revolutionary success. Gramsci too was very insightful on how to do such analyses, but mainly after his failure to make a consistent and correct assessment of the situation in Italy, particularly with respect to the nature and seriousness of fascism. Seen in this light Gramsci's theoretical innovation of the concept of the expanded state, a concept that includes both political and civil society, was a brilliant extension of Marx's thought or method as opposed to a critique of Marx's thought. Both his analyses of the situations he faced and his development of theories and concepts to help with such analyses were entirely in keeping with Marx's method.

Yet not having engaged in an explicit or thorough discussion of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci's methods, Burawoy is oblivious to their methodological continuity. By contrast to Burawoy, who while raising what he considers the methodological flaws of Marx and Gramsci remains at the level of theory, the polemic that Lenin and Gramsci made against both forms of revisionism was targeted at their flawed philosophical foundations, not just their theoretical conclusions or analyses. It is to this point that Gramsci referred when he referenced the revisionist's failure to differentiate between Marx's thought and Marx's doctrine. Lenin and Gramsci critiqued the Second International on a methodological level and got into a real methodological discussion. Burawoy critiques classical Marxism on a methodological level but remains operative on a theoretical level in part because he does not have access to Marx's rich methodological work.

In fact there's just a huge quantity of methodological perspective in Marx and Gramsci that falls through the cracks when the focus is limited to their theoretical affirmations and concepts. Their theoretical affirmations and concepts, and in particular their dialectical determinism, cannot be fully understood without attention to this underlying methodological perspective and richness.

While in the very act of drawing attention to Gramsci's break with determinism Burawoy raises a methodological concern, the bulk of Burawoy's discussion of Gramsci, as was the case with his discussion of Marx (and Lenin), remains at the theoretical level. Thus, as with Marx, where his failure to engage with Marx's underlying method led to his misinterpretation of Marx's theoretical affirmations, in particular Marx's historical materialism and political economy (seeing them as the Second International did as explanatory versus a guide to explanation), here his failure to engage with Gramsci's underlying method, a method this thesis argues Gramsci appropriated from Marx, Burawoy fails to understand Gramsci's theory, in particular his political theory. Thus while he draws attention to the centrality of politics to Gramsci, he does exactly what Morera warns against in asserting that Gramsci attached to politics a theoretical significance that he did not in fact attach to it.

Of particular importance to our present discussion, Burawoy fails to see how for Gramsci, with his dialectical methodological underpinning, the economic structure was an essential part of his political theory and thus his assessment of situations. Gramsci no more turned his back on the economy and historical laws than Marx did in his political writings. For Marx, Lenin and Gramsci the economy and historical laws remained the context and the starting point of political analyses, which included an awareness of these objective or structural factors and processes in the more historically specific level of analysis that they take on and achieve.

According to Burawoy, for Gramsci there were no underlying dynamics of history, no analysis of contradictions within the economy between the forces of production and relations of production, and thus class struggle was contingent upon an array of political and ideological factors. Yet Gramsci made repeated reference to Marx's *Preface*, which he suggests had methodological not theoretical significance. For Gramsci, the long-term structural processes and tendencies referred to in the *Preface* and Marx's political economy did not in and of themselves explain a situation. Rather they were methodological principles to be employed in a thorough study of a situation. For Gramsci the long-term structural tendencies of capitalism towards economic crisis, along with the long-term processes of class formation, were the context for the political theory and action that was for Gramsci absolutely decisive in determining the outcome of a situation and trajectory of a society.

While in focusing his attention on Gramsci's method of analyzing the relations of force Burawoy does show how for Gramsci both the social and military forces provided a certain determinism of limits, this for Burawoy is, however qualified, a rather static determinism. Here Burawoy fails to see that for Gramsci the class structure was not a static entity but rather a long term structural process or tendency which together with other tendencies (the tendency of the social relations to fetter the productive forces, the tendency towards crisis as a result of the falling rate of profit and overproduction, etc.) contributed to Gramsci's understanding of the structural dynamics that were both the grounds of the working class's bid for a counter-hegemony as well as the objective basis of the related transformation from one socio-economic formation to another. Indeed for Gramsci, the "effective reality" of a situation was "not something static and immobile, but rather a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium." (Gramsci 1971, 172) Burawoy fails to see that Gramsci's whole analysis of situations was predicated on the notion that while

long-term structural processes determined the direction or broad outlines of history it was the interaction of these two kinds of processes, long-term and short-term, but also structural and superstructural, that determined the outcome of a situation.

When Burawoy raises the issue of crisis in Gramsci's work he speaks of it as if there is no relationship between merely economic crises and political crises. Yet Gramsci is pretty explicit on the relationship of long-term structural processes to these crises as well as the role of creating will (which includes intellectual, ideological and capacity – organizational and politico-military) to take advantage of these crises. As can be expected given the times he lived in and his experience with the times, the issue of crisis and his particular understanding of crisis were fundamental for Gramsci. The situations Gramsci tended to look at were characterized by crisis, contradiction and the need for resolution.

Along with and connected to this failure to see what he at times calls a dynamism in Gramsci's work, Burawoy interprets Gramsci's understanding of the relationship between civil society and the state in strictly political terms. (Burawoy 2003, 216) Yet while the function of Gramsci's integral or expanded state was political, the political existed in relationship to the economic. The expanded state was to adjust the forces of civil society to the demands of the economy, to preempt any civil society based challenges to the prevailing economic and social order.

In summary, perhaps the key formulation of Burawoy's misinterpretation of Gramsci is that Gramsci, not subscribing to a notion of determinist historical laws, left a focus on the economy and moved towards politics and ideology that he put at the center of his work. This may actually be the prevailing interpretation of Gramsci. And it is on this basis that one could today write a "Revolution Against *Prison Notebooks*" in the same vein that Gramsci himself wrote a "Revolution Against *Capital*." Such works would be useful mainly in a polemical context where the thing

being railed against is not actually the primary author's work but rather misinterpretations and misapplications of that author's work.

Burawoy's getting wrong who or what Gramsci broke with leads to his also getting wrong the trajectory and the very core of Gramsci's work. In Gramsci's break from the Second International he set out on a trajectory that was actually a return to a dialectical Marx. While the interpretation of Gramsci that Burawoy himself subscribes to has been used by many to underpin a post-Marxist position, Burawoy himself seems to be arguing for a Sociological Marxism that reintroduces what he sees Gramsci as having dismissed – some sense of underlying dynamics that would be the basis of both counter-hegemony as well as transitions and transformations between one social formation and another. But for this he turns to Polanyi as opposed to finding it in Gramsci.

As noted earlier, it is on the basis of Gramsci's supposed shortcoming of failing to have an understanding of the structural dynamics that underpinned counter-hegemony and transition, a shortcoming here dismissed as non-existent, that Burawoy turns to what he calls the Lukacs-Polanyi trajectory from Marx. It is to this trajectory that we now turn. But obviously in our turn towards it we look not for a correction to an alleged shortcoming, but rather for the influence it adds (be it useful insight or distraction/diversion from critical matters) to the effort to reconstruct Marxism.

The "Lukacs-Polanyi Trajectory"

As indicated in the previous section, Burawoy uses what he calls the "Lukacs-Polanyi trajectory," and in particular Polanyi, to correct the alleged shortcomings of Gramsci. As the previous section challenged Burawoy's claim to such alleged shortcomings, in this section we look to the issue of what the "Lukacs-Polanyi trajectory" adds to the reconstruction of Marxism. We do this by looking briefly at

Burawoy's interpretation and use of Lukacs before turning directly to an investigation of his interpretation and use of Polanyi.

However, before getting into an investigation of Lukacs it makes sense to raise the issue of Burawoy's identification of Polanyi as a Marxist. In many ways it seems unnecessary to have to locate Polanyi within the tradition of Marxism in order to suggest that he has something to contribute to its reconstruction.⁴⁷ In fact in addition to the use that the well-known Marxist David Harvey makes of Polanyi in his recent scholarship on neo-liberalism (Harvey 2005), many of today's Neo-Gramscians appropriate Polanyi extensively in their construction of what they call a transnational historical materialism. (Van der Pijl 1998, Gill 2003) Seemingly unaware of these efforts, for he doesn't cite them at all, it is just this assertion, that Polanyi can be understood as standing within the Marxist tradition, which Burawoy suggests.

Arguably, such an unorthodox assertion seems to demand a discussion of what it means to be a Marxist. And, such a discussion could actually be a useful contribution to the project of reconstructing Marxism. Yet, unlike his 1990 article, in his 2003 article Burawoy offers no explicit discussion of what it means to be a Marxist. In the 1990 article Burawoy attempts to show that Marxists are defined by their loyalty to and continued employment of what he considers to be the distinctive heuristics of the Marxist tradition. Such heuristics are found in both the historical materialist theses of Marx's *Preface* and the exemplars of theorizing with these theses that both Marx and Marxists after Marx have offered in their political economy and political writings. While flawed in many regards that are beyond the scope of discussion here, this at least is an attempt at a definition of what it means to be a Marxist. As noted, the 2003 article offers no such attempt at a definition. Without a

⁴⁷ Learning from sources outside the tradition would only require clarity on a methodological level of what's involved in such a process.

definition from Burawoy to work with we can turn to what might be considered the very vague and emergent definition that this thesis offers. In many ways our discussion in this chapter of the Marxist lineage and specific Marxists within that lineage has revealed that Marxists are those intellectuals that employ Marx's doctrine and/or method to make sense of and influence the situation with which they are dealing.

In light of this broad and what I consider to be widely encompassing definition it still appears questionable how Burawoy can interpret Polanyi to be a Marxist as Polanyi neither explicitly or implicitly employed Marx's doctrine or method and Burawoy doesn't even attempt to make the case to the contrary. Rather Burawoy begins locating Polanyi in the Marxist tradition by comparing what he considers to be Polanyi's problems with the determinism of classical Marxism to Gramsci's problems with classical Marxism, and discussing Polanyi's intellectual career in relationship to classical Marxism in much the same way he discusses Gramsci's intellectual career in relationship to classical Marxism. Thus for Burawoy Polanyi becomes a Marxist by virtue of a comparison with Gramsci. Essentially, for Burawoy, Polanyi is a Marxist because he, like Gramsci, has problems with classical Marxism and his views, like Gramsci's views, can be seen in relationship to classical Marxism. This is at base the argument of not 'guilt by association,' but 'Marxist by association.'

In one final act Burawoy attempts to close the deal on his assertion of Polanyi's card-carrying membership in the Marxist camp. This is where he turns to not Lukacs himself, but a misinterpretation of Lukacs, in what at this point has become for Burawoy a veritable well-worn practice of the misinterpretation of long since dead Marxists. In addition, having misinterpreted these Marxists, Burawoy then uses them against their will for ends to which they would not have subscribed.

Again using the parallel with Gramsci, whom he places in what he calls a speculative dialogue with Lenin, Burawoy places Polanyi in a speculative dialogue with Lukacs. However while there is actually some merit to the use of Gramsci's speculative dialogue with Lenin, as they both part from the determinism of the Second International in ways even more similar than noticed by Burawoy, the use of such a speculative dialogue between Polanyi and Lukacs is highly problematic. Perhaps Burawoy intends that by its association with the first speculative dialogue this second speculative dialogue will pass without close inspection. Indeed it is the main means by which Burawoy locates Polanyi in not just Marxism as a whole, but rather even more specifically, in a particular branch of Marxism, the "Lukacs-Polanyi trajectory" from Marx and classical Marxism. Yet on the basis of closer review, we can identify the problematic nature of this maneuver. This involves a short review of Burawoy's interpretation and utilization of Lukacs before returning to what for Burawoy is the main focus of the trajectory, Polanyi's contribution to Gramsci's supposed shortcomings.

Here we see that Lukacs is used not directly on the basis of what his ideas contribute to the reconstruction of Marxism, but in the main as a steppingstone to Polanyi or bridge between Polanyi and the Marxist tradition. But here we are not dealing with Lukacs himself, but Burawoy's misinterpretation of Lukacs. In misusing Lukacs for this purpose Burawoy actually passes over the interesting insights Lukacs has to offer the reconstruction of Marxism. It is to his misinterpretation of Lukacs that we now turn.⁴⁸

In beginning his 1990 discussion of Lukacs Burawoy points our attention to how Lukacs' understanding of class consciousness, reification and dereification were

⁴⁸ As we do so it should be noted from the start that there are no references in either of Burawoy's articles to any specific passages from either Lukacs or his interpreters with which Burawoy supports his interpretation.

the main means with which Lukacs challenged the determinist historical laws of classical Marxism. Burawoy seems to imply that for Lukacs an understanding of class consciousness, the blocks to class consciousness, and the means of overcoming these blocks were essential to the success of the revolutionary process. According to Burawoy Lukacs defined class consciousness as “the perspective the working class would have if it could see the totality. It is a consciousness imputed to the working class – not a necessary but an objectively possible consciousness.” (Burawoy 1990, 787) In discussing Lukacs on reification Burawoy suggests that Lukacs drew upon Marx’s work on commodity fetishism when he defined reification as “the way in which products become objects, divorced from their production. It affects not only commodities but also facts and relations. It leads to fragmented, atomized and isolated consciousness rather than a revolutionary, totalizing class consciousness.” (Burawoy 1990, 787) Burawoy continues by making the point that the product of this reification process for Lukacs is quite similar to Marx’s discussion of alienation in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, a work to which Lukacs had not had access. Burawoy concludes his 1990 discussion of Lukacs by suggesting that his theory of dereification, which focused on the role of deepening crisis, evolving struggles and such prefigurative institutions as workers councils and the Party, was too ad hoc and superficial to be of much use.

By contrast Burawoy in 2003 suggests that Lukacs’ theory of reification is quite different from Marx’s thought on commodity fetishism and alienation. While Lukacs employed Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism, he parted company with Marx who according to Burawoy suggested that commodity fetishism, and the market in particular, “obscures the centrality of production, which contains the hidden secret of capitalism’s law-like demise while also the locus of exploitation and class formation.” (Burawoy 2003, 211) For Burawoy Lukacs asserted that

commodification, and thus the market, was “not epiphenomenal but rather the defining experience of capitalism, extending to all realms and all classes.” (Burawoy 2003, 211) Burawoy continues that for Lukacs reification, or “turning relations into commodities ... [was] the essence of capitalism.” (Burawoy 2003, 211) If anything Burawoy’s 2003 discussion of Lukacs on dereification is even weaker than his 1990 discussion for he fails to avail himself of Lukacs’ concept of totality, a key link in understanding Burawoy’s overall misinterpretation of Lukacs.

Arguably Burawoy’s main mistake here is seeing Lukacs as having suggested that reification was the essence of capitalism and not as Marx suggested in his discussion of commodity fetishism the phenomenal form in which people experienced capitalism. Yet Lukacs is closer to Marx than Burawoy suggests. We see this in Lukacs’ concept of totality that as mentioned Burawoy of 2003 fails to engage with at all and the Burawoy of 1990 only touches on in passing. By the concept of totality Lukacs referred to not only the critical need to engage with Marx’s method, like Gramsci, but what he considered to be the core of Marx’s method. Indeed, as Marshall suggests, “the notion of totality is, for Lukacs, the most important concept in Marxism, because it enables one to penetrate the appearances of social reality (dominated by commodity fetishism and reification), to understand the real human relationships that underlie these surface manifestations.” (Marshall 1998, 375-376)

If for Lukacs, as Burawoy suggests, reification was the essence of capitalism then there was no meaning for totality. Yet as seen for Lukacs the concept of totality allowed him to suggest the means by which the working class could overcome the fragmentation of its life and see the whole of their situation. By the whole Lukacs had in mind the relations of production in which the workers were enmeshed and everything else inseparably connected to these relations - the exploitation and capital accumulation processes, related historical tendencies and the shifting grounds of class

formation. Thus, like Marx on commodity fetishism, for Lukacs reification was important but as an expression of the way in which people experienced capitalism, not as a statement about the essence of capitalism.

In this Lukacs' concept of reification actually makes an interesting addition to Gramsci's understanding of the situation that the workers face. While Gramsci pointed to bourgeois hegemony, Lukacs pointed to the reified existence or experience of capitalism, thus bringing our attention back to Marx's discussion of commodity fetishism.⁴⁹ Burawoy's critique of Gramsci's failure to have a theory of counterhegemony is similar to his critique of Lukacs' failure to have a theory of dereification. While Burawoy criticizes both Gramsci and Lukacs for their reliance on the ideological work of the party, he misses two points. First, for both Gramsci and Lukacs the act of raising the consciousness of the working class and making it a revolutionary subject was not just ideological but intellectual. As such, a return to Marx's method, either his dialectics for Gramsci or his totality for Lukacs, was key in the intellectual development of the workers and the reconstruction of Marxism to assist with this task. Second, for both Gramsci and Lukacs, there remained underlying structural dynamics or long-term structural processes or tendencies, though not of the reductionist determinist type of the Second International, that the workers could lean on that underpinned or served as the grounds for their bid for hegemony. It is on the basis of just his flawed critique of both Gramsci and Lukacs, that Burawoy turns to Polanyi.

By suggesting that for Lukacs reification or the market's commodification of all realms of existence was the essence of capitalism (and not what he really suggested

⁴⁹ This is reminiscent of Ollman's interpretation of Marx on the need for science being based in the relationship in capitalism between the appearance of things and their essential reality. For Ollman the point of Marxism is to reveal this underlying reality as the basis of the working class' oppression and leverage in changing society.

that it determined the fragmented and incomplete understanding of life within capitalism) Burawoy is able to place Polanyi's focus on the market, and its commodification of land, labor and money, as within the Marxist tradition. And in light of the alleged failure of Gramsci and Lukacs to have any understanding of the structural dynamics at the base of class formation, hegemony and social trajectory (a charge that has also been challenged) Burawoy is able to suggest that Polanyi actually provided a valuable service to the tradition by reintroducing a sense of Marxian dynamics to both lineages. For Burawoy Polanyi did this not by way of the traditional focus on production relations but rather by a focus on exchange relations, not by a focus on the relationship between forces and relations of production, but through a focus on the societal reaction to the market.

With Lukacs serving mainly as a steppingstone to Polanyi, the real focus of the "Lukacs-Polanyi trajectory" is Polanyi. Yet if we don't accept the claim that Polanyi is a Marxist and if we don't accept Burawoy's claimed shortcomings in Gramsci to which Polanyi then speaks, what does Polanyi offer the project of reconstructing Marxism? In what ways does Polanyi, or the interpretation and use of Polanyi, contribute to or detract from Burawoy's and our own project of reconstructing Marxism?

As has been stated, Burawoy's interest in Polanyi is to address the shortcomings of Gramsci, in particular Gramsci's lack of an understanding of the structural dynamics that underpinned the working class's possibility of counter-hegemony and the transformation from one social formation to another. Even though we've refuted this critique of Gramsci, we can still start off with how Burawoy interprets and employs Polanyi in this regard. For Burawoy Polanyi's concept of the double movement enables an understanding of the basis for the imperative of not only the working class but more so society to act upon threat to its life force that provides

both the grounds and rationale for its counter-hegemony as well as the basis of the transition to a new form of society. As Burawoy states, “in Polanyi’s analysis of conjunctures transformation and transition is infused with a dynamic analysis of the tendencies and countertendencies to the development of markets at the local, national, and global levels. This singular contradiction, the so-called double movement, underlies divergent solutions and national trajectories.” (Burawoy 2003, 239)

Yet arguably, it is on the very question of dynamics and imperative to which Burawoy turns to Polanyi that Polanyi, or at least Burawoy’s interpretation of Polanyi, falls short. For Polanyi, or how he is used both here by Burawoy and frequently by his other interpreters, fails to discuss the underlying mechanisms of both aspects of the double movement – both the market’s commodification of society and society’s response to the market.

For a sense of the underlying dynamics of the market’s commodification of society we can turn to the Neo-Gramscians, and in particular Kees Van der Pijl. (Van der Pijl 1998) In his 1998 work *Transnational Classes and International Relations* Van der Pijl employs Polanyi to get at the question of what he calls the external limits to capitalism, in particular its contradiction with its natural and social substratum. Yet he simultaneously suggests that at the base of and driving the market’s commodification of society is the inherent imperative of the capital accumulation process itself. This is the fundamental imperative that Marx looks at in *Capital* and to which Lenin and Gramsci continue to subscribe. The imperative of the capital accumulation process, the thirst for profit, rooted in the inherent competition of capitalists, leads to changes in the labor process and the endless drive to acquire and gain control of new markets or new arenas of capital accumulation. In many ways this commodification of society is an extension of primitive accumulation into today. Here all barriers to capital accumulation are removed by bringing all aspects of life, society,

nature, etc. into the arena of capital accumulation and subjecting all to the discipline of capital. In this way capitalism reaches both its internal limits or contradictions (falling rate of profit, overproduction, surplus capital) and external limits or contradictions (destruction of humanity and environment).

As far as the structural dynamics that underpin society's response to the market, we can first compare Polanyi's concept of how commodification destroys the life force of humanity with Marx's concept of alienation. While similar in their effect on humanity, for Marx alienation was rooted in the labor process. Additionally, while for Polanyi commodification seemed to precipitate society's response, for Marx alienation remained a circumstance to be overcome by successful revolutionary activity on the part of working class. In this for Marx the basis of the working class's power was its concentration in the factories with its hands on the productive apparatus of society that had to be kept moving if society was to continue function. Of course the imperative in Marx can be seen in his formulation of the contradiction between productive forces and production relations, which on a more concrete level translated into economic demands and crises where the capitalists could not address the underlying causes of the crisis and the workers, with their vision and program for socialism, could if successful in their efforts at counter-hegemony and revolution. While Burawoy suggests Gramsci turned his back on a determinist understanding of historical materialism, our work, drawing on Morera, has shown that he maintained a sense of historical tendencies which together with effective political activity translated into the determination of hegemony and social trajectory.

But in addition to the underlying imperative aspect of counter-hegemony and social trajectory, Burawoy credits Polanyi with a discussion of the working class's need for independence and self organizing capacity (Burawoy 218) as well as its increased efficacy when it raised its own demands as the demands and needs of

society, two themes we also see in Gramsci. Yet, Burawoy suggests that Polanyi was weak in his understanding of the strength of bourgeois hegemony and how to overcome it. While Burawoy turns to E P Thompson's work on how the working class draws on its own traditions of organization in its mobilization efforts, unreferenced by Burawoy are Gramsci's insights on subjective class formation and the construction of counter-hegemony. Here Gramsci pointed to not just the role of crisis in enabling shifts in consciousness, but also the role of organic intellectuals (and the Party) in conducting intellectual (employing Marx's method) as well as ideological struggle that took into account and advantage of historical legacies and resources (cultural and organizational).

Polanyi's conception of the commodification of society seems to offer insight into the external limits of capitalism that builds upon and goes further than Marx's work on primitive accumulation (and as noted is employed to good advantage by the Neo-Gramscians). As Burawoy points out, for Polanyi it was commodification itself that threatened the viability of capitalism. However, Polanyi's conception of commodification also has the potential of obscuring or diverting our attention away from the capital accumulation process or what remains the underlying imperative behind commodification and the continued location within capitalism of its internal contradictions, the basis of its external contradictions, and the objective yet dynamic grounds for class formations capable of mounting or leading a counter-hegemonic historical bloc.

While there is value to Polanyi's focus on the antagonism between the market and society, his failure to look at the underlying dynamics of both aspects of the double movement allows some to appropriate Polanyi for what can be considered a capitalist friendly revisionist social democratic purpose. Here we can distinguish

between Polanyi and how people use Polanyi in a similar way to how we distinguished between Marx and how people use Marx, and Gramsci and how people use Gramsci.

Burawoy suggests that Polanyi remained committed to socialism and the elimination of private property. He adds that Polanyi didn't explore the transition to socialism in part because he didn't appreciate the strength of bourgeois class domination. Despite Polanyi's commitments, a revised social democracy appropriates Polanyi for his discussion of the market and society, and his already mentioned failure to focus on the underlying capital accumulation process, to support its objective of market constraints or regulation as opposed to the Marxist project of communism or even the long lost social democratic project of an evolution to socialism.

Additionally, this revised social democracy appropriates Polanyi's focus on the antagonism between the market and society, in particular his discussion of how on different matters and at different times different classes represented the general interest more than others. For Polanyi these classes competed with each other to represent their own interests in terms of the preservation and expansion of society. Indeed, Burawoy suggests that for Polanyi society was the transcendent historical category not class. He was interested in the transition from society in itself to society for itself. Thus for a revised social democracy historical agency now lies not with the working class, but with society, or what Burawoy alternatively calls the "multitude against the market" (reminiscent of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri) or a "veritable transnational public protecting different constituencies against market devastation." (Burawoy 2003, 240) Here we see that in focusing on the antagonism between the market and society not only has the class character of that antagonism been obscured, but attention has been diverted from the underpinning capital accumulation process, its internal and external contradictions, and the objective basis of class formation and counter-hegemony.

Burawoy suggests that the universalism of the market touches everyone in multiple ways and thus has a greater capacity to ignite and inspire than the accumulation and production process. All suffer from the market since unrestrained it leads to a destruction of the environment, the colonization of free time, etc. However, while the threat of the market may be a more appealing narrative for humanity it is potentially a dangerous one if it is allowed to divert attention from the social forces available for counter-hegemony. While there is clearly an antagonism between the market and society, its class element must not be disregarded. Rather, it seems important that the class elements of the current crisis be re-specified. Yet they must remain privileged not in a narrow class sense, but in a more broad hegemonic or ethico-political sense. For Burawoy the amalgam of movements against globalization without any single privileged social force is sufficient grounds for a counter-hegemony. Yet arguably such a historical bloc or movement requires the leadership of a social force rooted in, or discarded from, the structural yet dynamic underpinnings of society. Only such a force can ensure that the objective is a truly democratic and communal one and not a revised social democratic one of reformed capitalism.

Historical Agency and the Role of Intellectuals

We can preface our move to an explicit investigation of Burawoy's Sociological Marxism with the arguable proposition that amongst the critical issues for Marxist political theory since its origins have been those of historical agency and the role of intellectuals. Since as noted throughout this chapter Burawoy's focus is on the level of political theory, we can start our discussion there while moving later to the realm of method.

It's important to state up front though that for Marxists the concept of historical agency can only be understood when placed in the context of the dialectical

relationship between structure and superstructure that Gramsci drew attention to with his conception of historical necessity. As Gramsci himself stated, when it came to Marxist political theory, the critical question was always the relationship between structure and historical movement, or how did “historical movement arise on the social base?” (Gramsci 1971, 431) For Gramsci this was the “crux of all questions that [had] arisen around the philosophy of praxis ...” and it was on this basis that “the formation of active political groups” had to be posed. (Gramsci 1971, 432) While Gramsci understood such active political groups as consisting of both class based and non-class based actors, for him it was the class-based actors that were privileged in that they were necessarily understood as the leadership of historical blocs, either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic.

Gramsci’s concept of hegemony enables us to see the relationship between the question of historical agency and the role of intellectuals. Morera asserts that Gramsci developed his concept of hegemony in order to “conceptualize intellectual and moral leadership within social blocs.” (Morera 1990b, 188) There were two sets of intellectual and moral relations at work within historical blocs. On the one hand there was the relationship between the emergent subaltern fundamental social force and other non-fundamental social forces within the historical bloc. On the other hand there was the relationship (organic, open and characterized by mutual learning) between the intellectuals and the masses within the historical bloc. For Gramsci it was intellectuals in organic relationship with fundamental social forces that facilitated their leadership of society or social movements. Gramsci’s extensive discussion of his concept of organic intellectuals speaks to the political significance he placed on this issue.

In looking at the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals today, it can be useful to look back to the origins and subsequent development of the

Marxist lineage. Expounded upon towards the second half of the 19th century, for many radicals Marx's idea of the historical agency and revolutionary subjecthood of the working class was not only far from accepted but shocking. Indeed it was only through their formative intellectual and political work/experience that both Engels and Marx actually came to this position. But by 1847 with the printing of what became known as the *Communist Manifesto*, and the subsequent year's revolutionary outbreaks across Europe, it is clear that not only Marx and Engels, but a good portion of the rest of society too, were convinced that not just the working class, but its program of Communism, was "haunting Europe." (Tucker 1978, 473) In the *Manifesto* Marx went on to discuss the role of communists in relationship to the movement of the working class.

At the turn of the century Marxists of the Second International, having interpreted Marx's works in a determinist fashion, tried to understand the working class's reformism in light of what was supposed to be its revolutionary agency. While Bernstein suggested the working class was not revolutionary and there was in fact no need of revolution given what would be a gradual evolution to socialism, Kausky suggested that further development in the economic structure would prove the working class remained a revolutionary agent. Luxemburg foreshadowed Lenin and Gramsci and spoke to the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals in her suggestion that the working class was at that moment potentially revolutionary and all that was required was an active and clear intervention on the part of the communists.

Lenin addressed the reformism of the European proletariat by suggesting it had been the product of bribes from imperialism returning home to the core's working classes. He and the Russian Marxists had also to take on and defeat Narodnik conceptions that prevailed within progressive sections of Russian society that the peasantry was the revolutionary social force. In this context Lenin asserted that in the

maturing political crisis within Russia (resulting from war related instability, economic collapse and rising militancy on part of the working class) the workers could successfully lead a revolutionary struggle if they won to their side the peasantry. For this the Communist Party would be essential.

In the Italy of Gramsci's day it was clear to all that the working class, which similar to the Russian proletariat had been radicalized by the instability precipitated by World War I, was a force with which to be reckoned. Yet as seen in the last chapter Gramsci had to deal with the prevailing understanding of its agency and the role of intellectuals in relationship to this agency. Here Gramsci asserted that in Italy the working class could only lead a revolutionary movement if it established its political independence from the bourgeoisie and won to its side the peasantry. For the working class to understand its need to differentiate itself from the capitalist class and establish its necessary relationship with the peasantry would take a cadre of intellectuals who formed its will and subjecthood through ideological, intellectual and practical means.

Mao and the revolutionaries of the Third World called into question the prevailing political doctrine that the working class was the bearer of historical agency and revolutionary subjecthood. Bucking the trend of the Marxist tradition, Mao, and Fanon amongst others after him, asserted that it was the peasantry that would lead the march to revolution. Here we see that while class remained a central analytical and strategic concept, it was specified differently based on an analysis of the developing relations of forces. Arguably what enabled Lenin, Gramsci, and Mao to develop and act upon such assessments, and the doctrines based on these assessments, was their grasp of the Marxist dialectical method as embodied, if not directly and explicitly, in the works of Marx himself, in particular those works where he applied his method to specific historic circumstances. Each of them spoke in no uncertain terms about the significance of the dialectic to Marxist theory and practice.

Today at the turn of the 21st Century the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals continues to remain prominent. Reformist in its inclinations and actions since WWII, the working class today is also not only numerically decimated but structurally undermined by both the mobility (or structural power) of capital and the strength of its neo-liberal narrative. The peasantry too faces similar challenges as Mike Davis draws attention to in his *Planet of Slums*. (Davis 2006) In this context the question once again surfaces as to the historical force capable of leading a counter-hegemonic historical bloc.

Many progressive intellectuals of all stripes rather than remain trapped as they like Burawoy perceived the Second International had done in Marxism, or what is still considered to be a determinist tradition, have established or turned to alternative theoretical frameworks for explaining the contemporary reality. Here we look at just one, the post-Marxists to whom Burawoy and Morera in their 1990 articles give attention.

In his 1990 article Burawoy draws our attention to how “the weakness of working-class movements and a dwindling commitment to socialism leads Marxists beyond Marxism to indiscriminately embrace new social movements which have a nonclass or multiclass character, such as feminism, civil rights, environmental and peace movements (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Boggs, 1986).” (Burawoy 1990, 790) Burawoy goes on to suggest that for such “post-Marxism” the “primacy of economic exploitation” is replaced with “multifarious forms of domination, and instead of a classless socialism, its goal is radical democracy (Bowles and Gintis).” (Burawoy 1990, 790) Burawoy adds that “post-Marxism gets lost in the web of history where everything is important and explanation is therefore impossible.” (Burawoy 1990, 790)

Morera also in his writings of 1990 speaks similarly to the post-Marxism of Laclau and Mouffe, who he situates as discourse theorists. According to Morera, the underlying philosophical assumption of Laclau and Mouffe's anti-essentialist approach is that no single historical element is determinant of a situation or social phenomena or determines its meaning. Rather for Laclau and Mouffe there is an "intrinsic neutrality" to all social elements. (Morera 1990a, 171) For Laclau and Mouffe "there is no privileged element, no essential feature that would confer identity to the whole by its relationship to the rest of the elements of the whole." (Morera 1990a, 35) Morera concludes that the theoretical and political implications of such a position are great. With no privileged element, "history cannot be explained by appealing to any one particular element," such as class. Morera sees this as the "demise of class-centered history" and the "rejection of class reductionism" which "perhaps more than any other critique of Marxism" has marked "what is now widely claimed to be the crisis or even death of Marxism." (Morera 1990a, 35)

Before leaving Morera's discussion of Laclau and Mouffe, we see that Morera suggests that for Laclau and Mouffe the meaning of something is a "function of its place in the discourse, not of a possible reference to something non-discursive." (Morera 1990a, 171) Thus with no appreciation for an analysis of the evolving relations of forces, of ultimately determinant limits and tendencies, Morera suggests that for discourse theorists it is the "hegemonic principle" or "discursive practice ... which confers identity on social phenomena." (Morera 1990a, 171) We can add that thus discourse theorists themselves, or what we have been referring to as intellectuals, become the critical ingredient of progressive movements. Morera suggests that, with his understanding of underlying generative mechanisms, historical necessity and the causal nexus, Gramsci had a "far more complex and richer analysis of hegemony than the one proposed by discourse theorists." (Morera 1990a, 172) Here we see that

Morera's work on excavating what he considers a more accurate read of Gramsci's historicist method and the methodology of Gramsci's political theory seems to hold out the way forward for Marxism. It is exactly such a read of Gramsci and Marx that Burawoy misses in his efforts at reconstructing Marxism.

The Framework of Burawoy's Sociological Marxism

Burawoy's Sociological Marxism comes to today, and the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals, having freed itself from the determinism that according to Burawoy had characterized the tradition since its inception. Before we look directly at Burawoy's understanding of historical agency and the role of intellectuals, we first look at what he considers the essential framework of his Sociological Marxism.

As noted earlier, for Burawoy it is Gramsci and Polanyi's common framework that becomes the basis of his Sociological Marxism. Whereas for Burawoy classical Marxism consisted of three foundational claims, Sociological Marxism has three postulates of its own. In contrast to classical Marxism's self-destroying capitalist economy, Sociological Marxism emphasizes the constitution of society mediating between state and economy, containing and absorbing tendencies towards self-liquidation. In contrast to classical Marxism's self-expansion of class struggle, Sociological Marxism focuses on the construction of hegemony via compromises and alliances that coordinate class interests. In contrast with classical Marxism's spontaneously generated conditions of socialism, Sociological Marxism sees the possibility of multiple trajectories and that socialism has to be initiated within capitalism in a process consisting of prefigurative politics of self-conscious collective organization. Such prefiguring of socialism is neither spontaneous nor inevitable.

Whereas classical Marxism subscribed to what Burawoy considers the determinism of historical materialism, with its laws of motion of individual modes of production, Sociological Marxism subscribes to a determinism of society's limits (which he derives from Gramsci's method of analyzing situations) and tendencies (which he derives from the imperative and rationale he sees in Polanyi's double movement). It is here that Burawoy gets into his discussion of the factors involved in class formation and the construction of counterhegemony, factors which thus simultaneously appear as determinants of the outcome of situations or national trajectories. Implicit in this discussion is a particular understanding of historical agency and the role of intellectuals. Such an implicit understanding continues into Burawoy's discussion of the development and tasks of Sociological Marxism today.

Burawoy develops the foundations of his Sociological Marxism on the basis of his interpretation of the Marxist lineage, and in particular the work of Gramsci and Polanyi. Yet, much as Gramsci and Polanyi historicized for their time and situation the work of Lenin and Lukacs respectively, so too for Burawoy today's Marxists must historicize the work of Gramsci and Polanyi. For Burawoy, given the newness of the situation today, Gramsci and Polanyi must be seen as "point of departure but not as point of conclusion." (Burawoy 2003, 243) Thus for Burawoy Sociological Marxism will develop beyond its foundations when it takes on what he considers the various dimensions of contemporary society that have developed since Gramsci and Polanyi's time. With respect to these new developments Sociological Marxism must go beyond Gramsci and Polanyi.

Burawoy sets the stage for an exploration of these new dimensions with a discussion of what he calls the "Age of Postcommunism." (Burawoy 2003, 242) As seen, in his 1990 article Burawoy references the "the weakness of working-class movements and a dwindling commitment to socialism" as well as the prevalence of

“new social movements which have a nonclass or multiclass character, such as feminism, civil rights, environmental and peace movements.” (Burawoy 1990, 790) Now, in 2003, he suggests “the collapse of communism has done irreparable damage not only to the credibility of socialism but also to the popular appeal of social democracy.” (Burawoy 2003, 242) He continues “in the postcommunist era progressive struggles have moved away from distributional politics to focus on identity politics or what Nancy Fraser calls a politics of recognition.” (Burawoy 2003, 242) Finally he adds “a Sociological Marxism for today must accommodate this important shift but without losing sight of class.” (Burawoy 2003, 242) It is in this context that Burawoy then draws our attention to what he considers the three fundamental new developments in the nature of a society already socially stratified by class – its bifurcation by race, its fragmentation by a galaxy of patriarchies, and the transnational extension of its boundaries beyond the nation state.

Agreeing with the post-Marxists and other progressive intellectuals of various stripes that the working class clearly is not able to mount a counter-hegemonic challenge, Burawoy’s Sociological Marxism turns to Polanyi’s double movement of the expansionist market and society’s response to the market, as the grounds for, basis of, and most effective rhetorical device of counter-hegemony. Here he has used not only Lukacs’ discussion of reification and the market, but also Gramsci’s discussion of civil society to bring Polanyi and his concept of the double movement into not only the Marxist tradition, but the very center of his Sociological Marxism.

Burawoy translates Gramsci’s understanding of the production process into what he calls a productivist ideology that for Gramsci serves as the basis of the workers’ counter-hegemony. In this context Burawoy suggests that as a mobilizing narrative the Polanyian inspired ideology of society’s response to the market is superior to this productivist ideology. Yet here Burawoy has mistaken what for

Gramsci was a matter of both analysis and ideology, for simply ideology. By shifting the focus from the dynamics of capitalist exploitation, the production process and production relations, capital accumulation and the class structure to the dynamics of exchange relations and the market Burawoy loses access to an important element in the analysis of the evolving and dynamic relations of force which were at the basis of Gramsci's political theory, or his methodology of political science.

While as Burawoy notes both Gramsci and Polanyi's work retains a sense of class analysis, Polanyi's, which Burawoy not only leans to but adopts, emphasizes the class struggle against commodification or the market. It's important to note that in this formulation the working class is no longer privileged in its response to the market relative to other social forces. It reacts just like other social forces (the civil rights movement, feminist movement, environmental movement, etc.) to the market's infringements.⁵⁰

Thus for Burawoy we have a historical bloc of mainly non-class based actors. Yet with no privileged social force to lead the historical bloc and society, all that is left is intellectuals who no longer stand in relationship to a particular social force, but now rather stand in relationship to society as a whole. Thus the role of the intellectual is privileged, even central, not just essential, and it is for these intellectuals that Burawoy's Sociological Marxism is designed.

From his review of the Fanon's relationship to the anti-colonial struggles, Malcolm X and Huey Newton's relationship to the radical wing of the US civil rights

⁵⁰ While the Neo-Gramscians retain their focus on the production relations or labor process, they turn to Polanyi to assist with what they call the external limits of capitalism. Yet for them, and in particular Van der Pijl, class remains a privileged actor in not just the maintenance of the prevailing hegemony, although that too is their focus, but also the construction of the counter-hegemonic historical bloc. Van der Pijl, somewhat oddly, actually turns to what he calls the cadre class as the social force capable of leading a new counter-hegemonic historical bloc. In any event the Neo-Gramscians seem to be able to incorporate an understanding of the market's commodification of society, although as mentioned earlier driven by the capital accumulation process, with a framework that keeps production relations and class at the center of analysis.

movement, and the relationship of feminist scholars like Simone De Beauvoir and Nancy Fraser amongst others to the women's movement, it appears that for Burawoy each identity based social movement has its own intellectuals who assist the movement's constituency in differentiating themselves from those that oppress them and articulating the needs of the constituency as demands to be both recognized and addressed. In this they face, what Burawoy sees as, traditional intellectuals who seek to administer and depoliticize these demands.

From his criticism of Fraser, who he suggests does not critically examine the claims of feminist intellectuals to speak for the women they purport to represent, Burawoy seems to raise the issue for other such intellectuals in relationship to movements as well. Here he foreshadows a critique I suggest of his conception of new social movements as homogeneous entities as opposed to conflict ridden between reformist and revolutionary, bourgeois and proletarian elements. In claiming to speak for such movements the prevailing intellectuals obscure these divisions and struggles.

In some ways Burawoy addresses this issue by offering the model of Marxist intellectuals who speak for no particular group, as there is no longer a privileged group, but rather for society as a whole and in this they are more equipped than most because of the Marxist framework that they have at their disposal.

In this light it is Sociological Marxism's charge to contemplate, consider and understand these new dimensions and struggles so as to be able to draw attention to what Burawoy calls real, embryonic utopias that will "reawaken the socialist imagination." (Burawoy 2003, 243) Given a stratified, bifurcated, fragmented and transnational terrain that appears in many ways more difficult to transcend than in Gramsci and Polanyi's time, Burawoy suggests that "socialist transition to tomorrow" will require a new type of Marxist. (Burawoy 2003, 251) For Burawoy this will be a Marxist, or what Burawoy calls an ethnographic archaeologist, who "seeks out local

experiments, new institutional forms, real utopias if you wish, who places them in their context, translates them into a common language, and links them one to another across the globe.” (Burawoy 2003, 251)

In many ways Burawoy’s critique of classical Marxism is similar to the post-Marxist critique of Marxism in general. Both Burawoy and the post-Marxists challenge Marxism’s class-reductionism or reductionist determinism. Yet here Gramsci helps us with his point that often people who claim to be criticizing historical materialism are in reality criticizing historical economism. In response to its interpretation of Marxism and the reality of its day post-Marxism rejects all determinism. In reviewing Burawoy’s *Sociological Marxism* we see that it, rather than rejecting all determinism, arrives at a new form of qualified and social determinism – a determinism of society’s limits and tendencies. In such a formulation Burawoy turns to Gramsci and even more so Polanyi. Yet *Sociological Marxism*’s determinism is markedly lacking when held up to comparison with the dialectical element of Marx’s original method and Gramsci’s reappropriation of it. It is this flawed determinism that is at the basis of Burawoy’s flawed understanding of historical agency and the role of intellectuals.

While Burawoy’s efforts in his 2003 article are explicitly about engaging in the reconstruction of Marxism rather than the turning away from Marxism, in many ways through these efforts he ends up in the same place as the post-Marxists he critiqued in 1990. Whereas the post-Marxists leave Marxism’s distinctive heuristics, the privileging of the production relations and class, and the goal of a classless socialism, Burawoy also leaves the Marxism’s distinctive heuristics and its privileging of production relations and class.

In seeing Marx as determinist and Gramsci as voluntarist initially and then coming around to a qualified but insufficient determinism Burawoy fails to bring

attention to Marx's dialectical method and Gramsci's appreciation of this method. While both were dialectical Burawoy does not use the concept to refer to either of them nor any aspect of the Marxist tradition. In this he is similar to the Second International that too had no concept of the dialectic.

In missing the dialectical method Burawoy not only fails to avail himself of Marxism's ontology, epistemology and basic research guidelines, but he also departs from Marxism's conceptual framework, what Gramsci calls historical necessity, and its understanding of historical agency and the role of intellectual. In turning to Polanyi for assistance Burawoy may become more Polanyian than Marxist. While Burawoy attempts to reconstruct Marxism, in privileging Polanyi in this reconstruction he changes Marxism fundamentally.

Seeing in Marx's work only a transhistorical and determinist economic and political doctrine, Burawoy fails to avail himself of Marx's dialectical method. Thus he fails to apply this dialectic and other elements of Marxism to the current situation, and in particular the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals. Marx and Gramsci's dialectics allow for an understanding of the dialectical relationship between economics and politics or structure and superstructure as well as classes and new social movements.

Burawoy's Sociological Marxism and Contemporary Society

As referred to earlier, in 2003 Burawoy suggests that the 1990s saw a shift from distributional politics to identity politics or recognition politics. There are many problems with this formulation. First, in understanding this shift we can only hope to understand it by placing it in historical context. In this manner we see that the shift from distributional politics to identity or recognition politics is preceded by the shift from revolutionary politics to reformist politics. The expanding world economy post-

World War II provided the objective or social base of the reformism that developed, an expanding but highly stratified working class, in many ways an extension of the material base of the early reformism of the Second International's working class. In Europe this was complimented by the Marshall Plan and the huge allocation of cultural resources through which the US constructed a trade unionist movement and socialism loyal to Western, and in particular American, neo-imperialism. In the first world, in both the US and Europe (as well as Japan), the reformism of the working class signaled a shift from revolutionary politics, the struggle for power and the fundamental transformation of the underlying social structure, to a reformist or distributional politics over the social product that would leave the underlying social structure intact.

We can employ Burawoy's discussion of the anti-colonial struggles to explore how a corollary process transpired in the Third World. According to Burawoy Fanon suggested that the anti-colonial struggle was twofold – the break of the colonized from colonizers and the struggle for hegemony amongst the colonized. Depending on which element gained hegemony of the struggle, the national bourgeoisie or the revolutionary peasantry, the movement would either be supportive of the underlying social structure or used as part of the overall assault on that structure.

Burawoy also references the efforts of Malcolm X as well as Huey Newton and the Black Panthers, what he calls the radical wing of the civil rights movement.⁵¹ He suggests that they applied Fanon's framework to the US urban ghetto and concluded that it was the excluded and oppressed, the dispossessed African Americans of the American urban ghetto, and not the exploited but incorporated working class, that were the movement's and society's revolutionary forces. Here Martin Luther King, in

⁵¹ Burawoy fails to mention the destruction of the Negro Labor Councils, affiliates of the CPUSA, just prior to the emergence of the civil rights movement and the role of the historically black colleges in the development of a loyal leadership for the nascent civil rights movement.

the last years of his life, joined them with his Poor People's Campaign that raised the issue of not just civil rights but human rights, and in particular economic human rights. King suggested that the organization of the poor would be a "new and unsettling force" throughout the nation. (King 1968) Of course Malcolm and Martin were assassinated, Huey was locked-up, and the Panthers were destroyed by the FBI's Cointelpro program. It's interesting to wonder what would have happened to the civil rights movement and American society in general if the poor and working class elements of the civil rights movement had been able to gain hegemony of that movement.

Second, on this basis we see that the shift didn't just happen, but rather was socially engineered via both hard and soft means. The trajectory of these situations can be understood by employing Gramsci's notion of historical necessity and the relations of force within a situation. While long-term structural forces were at play and determined the general direction of history, it was politics that was decisive. In both the first and third worlds the bourgeois elements gained control of the movements.

Third, the identity movements began in the 1970s and 1980s, and not the 1990s as a result of the collapse of communism and the loss in appeal of social democracy. Burawoy is consumed by the transition from socialism to capitalism or the collapse of communism to the point where he calls this the Post-Communism Age. But why, especially if one continues to subscribe to the socialist objective, emphasize this? Such a formulation seems to fall in line with Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor, who with every speech and text tries to make it seem that such aspirations were and more importantly are foolish and unrealizable.

Fourth, in the 1970s and 1980s these identity based movements joined what had been secured by the then distributional politics of the working class. Even the

identity or recognition movements listed by Burawoy had a distributional element to them. While the civil rights movement and feminist movements aimed to have the demands of their constituencies recognized, they also wanted these demands addressed. Many of the demands were for a share in the expanding pie of the world economy. Additionally, and arguably, in many ways in light of the structural power of capital and the convincing rhetoric of neo-liberalism, the working class today joins the other identity or recognition movements in not only the meeting of its needs but the struggle for the recognition of its needs.

Fifth, much like the anti-colonial struggles of the post-war period and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, within these identity based movements, or new social movements, there is a struggle or at least potential struggle for hegemony between reformist and revolutionary, or in some cases more bourgeois versus proletarian elements. They are not non-class based movements, but rather multi-class based movements with a struggle for hegemony within them. As stated earlier, depending on which element gains hegemony of these movements, such movements can either be supportive of the underlying social structure or used as part of the overall assault on that structure.

Sixth, by the late 1990s there was a resurgence of a politics (perhaps mainly around the world if not so much in US for various reasons) that focused on economic and social questions. The emergent struggles of today are largely comprised of dispossessed masses from the first world (mainly the Anglo-American zone), the second world (as a result of Russia's shock therapy and privatization as well as China's state lead capitalist transition), and the third world. Here Malcolm X, Huey Newton and even Martin Luther King were prescient in their projection that the struggle of the poor, unincorporated and dispossessed, would be more revolutionary, in Gramscian terms potentially counter-hegemonic, than the reformist working class

now under attack by a virulent neo-liberal order. Indeed, this reformism, and the stratified working class it rested upon, left the entire working class unprepared for the economic crisis of the seventies and the turn to neo-liberalism by an empowered, now becoming truly transnational, capitalist class. In many ways the ranks of the dispossessed have been swelled by those of all colors as a result of the attack on what remains of an incorporated working class.

Burawoy, as with the post-Marxists, notes the trouble that plagues both Marxism and the working class. While his effort is to save Marxism, he does this by discarding not just the working class, but the concept of class as both the central analytical and strategic concept Gramsci showed it to be. Here his work joins with post-Marxists like Laclau who according to Morera critique Gramsci for his position that “only the fundamental classes of society can be hegemonic subjects.” (Morera 1990b, 186)

Morera’s response to Laclau is cutting. “The centrality of classes, however, is a historical principle. Only historical evidence, not the immediate sort of empirical evidence based on short-term developments, can validate this principle. At any point in time the immediate evidence of the role of classes may be lacking and other forms of political activity may be more evident and more important. The question is whether this mere conjuncture of political forces is sufficient evidence for the kind of conclusions reached by Laclau and others.” (Morera 1990b, 186) While Morera leaves the question open ended, this final section of our chapter on Burawoy has answered the question in the negative.

In fact, we can see that in Burawoy’s static or synchronic interpretation of Gramsci’s method of analysis of the relations of force in a situation or conjuncture he fails to see how Gramsci emphasized the dynamic and diachronic aspect of a situation by calling attention to the significance of the long-term structural processes at play in

the determination of a situation's outcome. The objective aspect of class formation, including the formation of new classes, was clearly part of what Gramsci had in mind with such a formulation.

If as has been argued here there is such a new class in formation, one that has a potentially counter-hegemonic role, then surely in light of formulations like those of the post-Marxists and Burawoy it requires its own organic intellectuals. Indeed, the analytical frames of post-Marxists like Laclau and Mouffe and "Marxists" like Burawoy, in attempting to make sense of reality, become part of that reality.

Both Burawoy and the post-Marxists point to the lack of the modern working class's revolutionary subjecthood to de-privilege the concept of class. Arguably, Burawoy's continued allegiance to the goal of a classless socialism is undermined by such a departure since the discard of the concept of class acts to preempt the development of a revolutionary subjecthood of a new class. In this manner Sociological Marxism leaves a new class that is arguably in formation and potentially counter-hegemonic completely unarmed in its efforts to knit together today's scattered motions into a counter-hegemonic bloc objectively grounded and strategically clear enough to challenge the contemporary bourgeoisie. Sociological Marxism is thus unable to assist the more revolutionary or dispossessed elements of today's new social movements or ensure that these new social movements are successful in achieving their objectives through being part of an overarching effort to fundamentally transform the underlying social structure as opposed to membership in an effort that seeks to maintain or preserve that structure.

The very role that Burawoy suggest Marxist intellectuals play, that of offering a binding narrative to movements they remain in extrinsic relationship with, blocks the development of the coherence of these movements as part of the new class's counter-hegemony. While there is a role for such a narrative and narrative construction, and it

does need to be based on the close study of conditions and emergent forms that Burawoy's Sociological Marxism and ethnographic archaeology suggest, it also needs to be done with those participating in these forms. It will be more effective when done by those in movements and those who identify strongly with them, from whatever vantage point, then by those who stand apart from them. And for this to happen the method of analysis and narrative construction has to be shared. In essence this is what the Marxist method has to offer. It is exactly this that falls out of Burawoy's reconstruction of Marxism. He does not see the need to get Marxism as a method into the hands of the masses, only the theory or narrative Marxists come up with.

Burawoy's argument for an extrinsic intellectual is similar to the social democratic position on leadership where a social democratic leadership comments on and puts out a vision for the progressive community while the leaders of various struggles, potentially counter-hegemonic struggles, focus on the specificity of their struggles. It relegates these movements to a economic corporate consciousness and not the ethico-political consciousness that Gramsci suggested necessary in their assuming a counter-hegemonic status and position.

How do such Marxist intellectuals approach their relationship to both the academy and the developing politics of the day? Here we can look to history. While Marx and the Young Hegelians dreamed of and planned for careers in the academy, they were expelled from academia on the basis of the radicalism of their political positions. While Gramsci left an academic career due to his growing interest in and the demands placed upon him by the working class movement, Fanon's radical intellectuals, like Marx and the Young Hegelians, were expelled from not just academia but the city based on their dissenting politics.

It is clearly possible for Marxist intellectuals to be engaged in community and social struggles in a way that makes them part of these struggles and thus enables them

to bring a piece to these struggles that they are in a position to bring, thus sharing the intellectual resources, in particular Marxist methodology, with the folks with whom they engage. While the case of Ashwin Desai at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, who has written extensively on the new poor of South Africa today, shows such an act of engagement, it also shows the act of institutional attack that such intellectuals are likely to face if they cross the accepted lines of the academy and so engage.

Conclusion

The development of today's movement requires not just organic intellectuals, but organic intellectuals equipped with a reconstructed Marxism. However in this light Burawoy's reconstructed Marxism is inadequate – both for the conceptual framework it devises, as addressed above, as well as its lack of attention to the need for such reconstructive efforts to analyze and address contemporary blocks to the development of the movement and Marxism itself. As already suggested Burawoy's narrative of the Marxist lineage, which focuses on efforts continuing to today to correct Marx, deflects attention away from prevailing flawed forms of Marxism that obstruct or preempt the ability to take advantage of the situation faced.

Burawoy accepts the Second International's interpretation of Marx as his own interpretation of Marx. Not only was this the Second International's interpretation of Marx, it was also the interpretation of most of Marx's biggest detractors and opponents, including but not limited to the classical sociology of Durkheim and Weber, not insignificant given Burawoy at noted is a past chair of the ASA. In fact the allegation of determinism has been at the heart of most academic and political, from both the left and right, assaults on Marxism.

Here we have a self-proclaimed Marxist contributing to the incredible dismissal of Marx with one brush stroke. In a sense Burawoy aims to take out Marx with his reconstruction of Marxism. The effect of Burawoy's narrative is to dissuade people from a serious study of Marx's work. Yet this is its major mistake – to not take the originator seriously. This is what Gramsci and Ollman are very clear about.

In particular Gramsci and Ollman are clear on the need for a real systematic treatment of Marx's method as the foundation for the further development and reconstruction of Marxism. In the absence of this Burawoy's Marxism doesn't have the methodological richness and texture that Gramsci and Ollman draw our attention to as present in Marx's work. There's just a huge quantity of methodological perspective in Marx and Gramsci that falls through the cracks when the focus is limited to their theoretical affirmations and concepts.

For Burawoy every moment after Marx has responded to the determinism of the original versus what was actually the case, that these subsequent moments used Marx's method to respond to misinterpretations of the original and other blocks in the movement. Just as Marx dealt with blocks to the working class movement, so too did Lenin and Gramsci. And Marxism today must also deal with blocks to the movement. The reconstruction of Marxism today does not stand apart from the lineage of Marxism and efforts at reconstructing Marxism. Nor does it stand apart from comparable historical challenges and political struggles that similarly consumed the political energies and intellectual resources of these earlier Marxists.

However, as discussed, the nature of the movement has changed from the working class movements of Marx, Lenin and Gramsci, to the national liberation and revolutionary movements of China, Vietnam, and other third world struggles that emerged in the decolonization process, to the emergent social struggles of today. The long term structural processes at work since Gramsci's reconstruction of Marxism

have created the ground for new imperative and the basis of a new class formation and counter-hegemony.

Additionally, as already discussed by way of post-Marxism, the predominant trend in the contemporary left is to rally against economism and for a voluntarism or anti-essentialism that fails to note the newness in today's situation. Thus the political implication of Burawoy's narrative is to disarm people in light of the situation they face by deflecting their attention from Marx's works on political economy which, addressing a similar voluntarism and utopianism that blocked the working class movement, clarified the tendencies towards crisis and its resolution that continue to this day. In its place Burawoy offers the limited conceptual framework and determinism discussed earlier.

In order for Marxism to play its role in dealing with the blocks to the movement's development Marxism itself must deal with the blocks to its own development. In this sense Burawoy is a perfect target for polemic. His work can be seen as an internal block to the reconstruction of Marxism whereas post-Marxism can be seen as an external block to its development. So the reconstruction of Marxism actually has to take him on, and in some ways this is what this chapter of the thesis has done. We can actually use Gramsci's perspective on polemics to explain the choice of Burawoy as a target of polemic. Before doing this one additional lesson for the contemporary reconstruction of Marxism is in order.

Fundamentally in Burawoy the act of going back to reappropriate Marx's method is not an element, let alone the essential first step to the reconstruction of Marxism. The only return to Marx that takes place for Burawoy is in the form of polemic against Marx. Yet the return to and reappropriation of Marx's method is an essential component of my understanding of how to reconstruct Marxism. In focusing on the correction of Marx's work Burawoy loses access to how Marx's dialectical

method has been and can be used to correct misinterpretations of Marx. In focusing on the determinism of Marx, Burawoy loses access to how Marx's dialectical determinism can challenge the prevailing voluntarism or anti-essentialism of today.

Burawoy speaks to the autonomy of reconstructions of Marxism but in one sense he is actually less autonomous than called for. He picks up the fight that Lenin and Gramsci waged against the prevailing determinism of their day, be it attributed to Marx as Burawoy suggests or the Second International as I argue Lenin and Gramsci suggested, and suggests this is the same fight that needs to be waged today. It may be that the prevailing Marxism is determinist and needs to still be freed of this encrustation, but the prevailing thought in the movement, perhaps a response to the perceived determinism of Marxism or at least prevailing forms of it, is arguably voluntarist.

The point here is that assessments of the prevailing ideological and intellectual ethos of the movement and society and the intelligentsia are essential so that intellectual work is directed at the necessary targets. For Marxists, assessment of the ideological and intellectual terrain and the role of polemics in light of such assessments is key. The imperative is to identify what the prevailing blocs are as opposed to saying the key element of reconstructing Marxism is the same as it was in Gramsci or Lenin's time. In fact an assessment of the movement today might show that it has a very similar take on society as it did in Marx's day and that we need more study of *Capital* rather than less.

While the construction of Marxism was done in polemic with philosophical idealism, utopianism, and voluntarism, for Lenin and Gramsci the reconstruction of Marxism was done in polemic with determinism. This does not however suggest that reconstruction will always be in light of determinism, but rather that the reconstruction of Marxism will be in light of historical challenges facing the movement and society

and prevailing currents, views and ways of thinking about these challenges that prevailed in Marxism itself, the movement and society at large. Each generation of Marxists has to assess the terrain and see what the situation calls for. While Marxism might still need to rid itself of the reductionist determinism that the Second International attempted to introduce into its fiber and its opponents have charged it with ever since, the point of such a removal of these determinist encrustations would be so as to enable it to introduce into the movement and society a more sound analysis of the dialectical determinism of the current situation, an assessment of which is sorely lacking.

Finally, as far as a polemic on Burawoy, we can turn to Gramsci for a reminder as to a polemic's objective, criteria, core content, and procedure. According to Gramsci "A new science [proved] its efficacy and vitality when it [demonstrated] that it [was] capable of confronting the great champions of the tendencies opposed to it and when it either [resolved] by its own means the vital questions which they [had] posed or [demonstrated], in peremptory fashion, that these questions [were] false problems." (Gramsci 1971, 433) In this chapter we've shown that while the questions of historical agency and the role of intellectuals are important questions, there is no need to turn away from Marx to address or resolve these questions. In fact it is perhaps just this that the Marxism of Marx and Gramsci is uniquely qualified to speak to. Additionally, the charge of reductionist determinism in the works of Marx is not only a non-issue but it deflects attention away from how the dialectical determinism of Marx's dialectical method can be employed to deal with the prevailing voluntarism and anti-essentialism of today.

Gramsci also spoke to how polemics did not destroy the enemy or his positions but rather clarified for oneself and the forces around oneself a position and what was

at stake if this position was not understood. This again has been an objective of this chapter.

With respect to the criteria for choosing a target of polemic Gramsci suggested that “what counts is not the opinion of every Tom, Dick, and Harry, but that ensemble of opinions which have become collective, a social element and a social force. These are the opinions that must be refuted, in the person of those of their theoretical exponents who are most representative and indeed worthy of respect for the high quality of their thought and for their ‘disinterestedness’ in the immediate term.” (Gramsci 1971, 440) Elsewhere he commented on how it was necessary to engage in a polemical battle with the most eminent of one’s adversaries.” (Gramsci 1971, 432-433)

With respect to the first of Gramsci’s three criteria for the selection of polemical targets, we can safely say that while in the Marxist tradition, the progressive community and society as a whole Burawoy is pretty much a non-entity, in the sociological discipline Burawoy is definitely a first rate champion of the misinterpretation of Marx. As far as the quality of his thought, while he provides a brilliant narrative of the Marxist lineage, in reality it is based on what must be seen as shoddy scholarship. As to the issue of disinterest, this matter is up for debate.

With respect to the core content of polemics we see that for Gramsci polemics were directed at prevailing views of reality. Polemics engaged in the thorough analysis of these views, their fundamental underpinnings, and argument with them. Gramsci’s return to Marx’s method allowed him to engage in polemic on a much more fundamental level than just the realm of political theory. It is just this that we have done with our critique of Burawoy.

In closing, and on the matter of procedure, Gramsci cautioned that “one must be fair to one’s enemies’, in the sense that one must make an effort to understand what

they really meant to say and not maliciously stop short at the superficial immediate meaning of their expressions.” (Gramsci 1971, 440) While as shown Burawoy fails repeatedly in this regard, with this extensive chapter I have attempted to remain loyal to and provide an accurate representation of Burawoy’s work despite my fundamental critique of it.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This conclusion will begin with a return to the introduction and its formulation of the research question of the thesis. It will then explore how each chapter speaks to this research question and, where applicable, builds upon the work of previous chapters. It will then suggest next steps towards a fuller answer to the research question. It will conclude with a discussion of what such an answer to that question allows in terms of future lines of research.

At the start of this thesis I stated that the broad research question of the thesis was “how have previous generations of organic intellectuals rejuvenated the Marxist perspective?” I then broke this question down into “two sub-questions that arguably [corresponded] to two dialectical moments in the rejuvenation process. These [were]: 1.) How do organic intellectuals come to own the Marxist perspective? 2.) How do organic intellectuals fight for the influence of the Marxist perspective?” With respect to the first of these two questions I suggested that the act of re-appropriating Marx’s method was central to Marxists coming to own the Marxist perspective. I thus suggested that the primary research question of the thesis was “how have previous generations of organic intellectuals appropriated (in the case of Marx) or reappropriated (in the case of Gramsci) the Marxist method?” I suggested that “this question [could] be further broken down into two component parts: 1.) How does the Marxist under investigation come to his understanding of the Marxist method? 2.) What is the method that he comes to?”

In some ways one of the most significant insights of the Marx chapter was actually that an understanding of an intellectual’s product should precede the study

and understanding of an intellectual's process of achieving that product. Thus the question of what was Marx's method actually included in its answer the questions what was Marx's method and how did he arrive at it? Similarly, as I turned to the Gramsci chapter I included in the question of what was his reappropriation of Marx's method the questions what was his reappropriation and how did he arrive at it?

Based on this methodological insight in the Gramsci chapter I looked at the whole system of Gramsci's work and understanding of Marxism before looking at what Gramsci came up with towards this ends and the influences that contributed to such a product. In particular I looked at Gramsci's envisioned project of reconstructing Marxism as well as the actual reconstruction of Marxism he was able to accomplish. On this basis I arrived at further perspective as to how to reconstruct Marxism as well as some insights on what a reconstructed Marxism would look like.

I took these insights from the previous chapters, on both how to reconstruct Marxism and what such a reconstructed Marxism would be, into the chapter on Burawoy's Sociological Marxism. While the Marx chapter laid the foundation for the thesis, and the Gramsci chapter became the pivot of the thesis (I got critical insight into the reappropriation of Marx's method and reconstruction of the Marxist perspective), in many ways the Burawoy chapter became the target of the thesis. Here I found that Burawoy actually abstracts out a piece of Marx's work, makes this all of his work and then projects forward the lineage on the basis of this flawed, because partial and incomplete, understanding of his work. Burawoy gets the history following Marx's method wrong due to his failure to study the system or synchronic aspect of Marx's thought, and the comprehensiveness of such a totality, before studying the historical or diachronic aspect of his thought.

The thesis introduction suggested that this thesis would look at how earlier Marxists reappropriated Marx's method as part of their reconstruction of Marxism so

as to inform similar efforts today. This is what this thesis has done. The Marx and Gramsci chapters clarify both what's involved in Gramsci's reappropriation of Marx's method and the method itself. With respect to the philosophical underpinnings of the method, the thesis has underscored the method's ontology and epistemology. The ontology is characterized by materialism and what Ollman calls the philosophy of internal relations; its epistemology is characterized by a dialectical realism and a focus on abstraction. With respect to its broad research guidelines, Marx's method suggested an investigation that began with system before history through what Ollman calls Marx's "dance of the dialectic." For both Marx and Gramsci, critique was an integral part of the method as a whole as well as a technique which they employed in clarifying for themselves and others the inconsistencies of rival theoreticians and the possibilities of their historical situations. For both Marx and Gramsci, the totality of their method including its internal and external relations developed through a critical and revolutionary engagement with unfolding epochal and conjectural processes and contending understandings of these processes.

This thesis has deepened my understanding of what is involved in the reconstruction of Marxism, and in particular the reappropriation of Marx's method, as well as reviewing the ways in which earlier Marxists have thought about these matters. The work of this thesis sets a strong foundation for future work. With the model for investigation that's been developed here, and in particular the reappropriated method, it would be interesting to apply this reappropriated method to a fuller reconstruction of the Marxist perspective as a whole. This would include the study and further elaboration of a Marxist political economy and political theory for today. Specifically it would also include a review and study of -

- The work of other Marxists both historical (for example Lenin, Lukacs and Mao) and contemporary (for example Stepehn Gill who inspired this

thesis and would have been included as a chapter had time permitted and David Harvey who I resisted exploring despite my inclinations).

- The work of contemporary social movements (such as the MST) that have arrived at such a method and perspective (how have they come to it? what has been the relationship between intellectuals with each other and with the masses? what is it?).
- The work of contemporary non-Marxists with respect to questions of method and broader perspective (both on the left and organic intellectuals of the ruling class which would include drawing on Gill's work on the Trilateral Commission)
- The prevailing ways of thinking in the common sense of the day (pragmatism, anti-intellectualism, anti-communism, ahistoricism) much like Gramsci in his day raised the issue and Ollman refers to as well.
- The alignment of forces in the current conjunctural and epochal situation (Such study might produce analyses on local, national and geopolitical levels, the latter informed by the work of the Neo-Gramscians).
- The ways and means of teaching all of this in person or via a manual of sorts and recruiting others into the study and application of this method.

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