Chapter One: INTRODUCTION

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Deeply embedded in Historical Materialism is the notion of emancipation, of a future in which human beings will peacefully co-exist with themselves and nature. It is a telos that has held and continues to hold human imagination. A history of this is today inconceivable without taking into account the contribution of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. To the stream of thought flowing from Marx and Engels must be added the contribution of scores of others, including Mao Tse-Tung. I have particularly singled out Mao because this thesis will attempt a 'synthesis' of Marx and Mao. My use of the idea of 'synthesis' must, however, be taken with some caution. I have in this thesis engaged myself only with Marx not Mao. Mao is 'present' but not explicitly.

I have in the chapters that follow attempted a reconstruction of Historical Materialism subtly using some of Mao's important ideas as a broad conceptual guide. The basis for this reconstructive effort is the complex nature of contemporary emancipatory experience. I believe that contemporary emancipatory experience is rooted not only in the working class movement but also in the feminist, ethno-communal/national and ecological movements. The former movement is based on class practices and the latter three are based on non-class practices. Thus the complex nature of
the present emancipatory experience cannot be understood as an experience merely produced by class practices. It is equally produced by non-class practices. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is really to reconstruct Historical Materialism in such a way that it is rendered sensitive to non-class practices. I want to introduce this sensitivity by salvaging non-class theoretical 'resources' in the corpus of Marx's writings and elaborating on them.

Before I proceed to link this aim with the notions offered by Mao, I would like to briefly explain the idea of practices. Every individual has a number of class and non-class positions. Each position entails a set of practices. A position is 'transformed' into a set of practices through the mediation of power, which takes two forms - the 'political' and the 'cultural'. Power takes these two forms because of the dialogic process. I have attempted a recovery of the dialogic process for Historical Materialism. As a result, I have conceived of an ideal dialogical act and this act is produced by a particular unfolding of the cultural and the political processes.

Let us return to Marx and Mao. In Marx, all strife disappears; in Mao it does not. One gave us the notion of 'antagonistic contradiction' while the other added the notion of 'non-antagonistic contradiction'. Marx defined a
'political revolution' while Mao proposed a (politically sensitive) 'cultural revolution' (or the notion of a non-Trotskyite version of 'permanent revolution'). These notions are extremely fertile and useful to my reconstructive efforts. Take for instance non-antagonistic contradiction. Conceptually there is a definite affinity between non-antagonistic contradiction and non-class practices that contribute to the feminist, ethno-communal/national and ecological movements. In fact, non-antagonistic contradictions articulate as non-class practices. For instance, the difference between the human male and the female cannot be resolved. There exists, therefore, a ground for unresolvable strife between them.

The difference between human beings and Nature, between various ethno-communities and between the male and the female cannot be dialectically transcended. These differences can, however, dialogically co-exist. It is thus my aim in this thesis to conceptually link dialectical transcendence and dialogical co-existence. Again, there is a conceptual affinity between antagonistic contradiction and dialectical transcendence (as in Marx) and between non-antagonistic contradiction and dialogical co-existence (as in Mao). Thus, for instance, it is possible to think of the difference between the male and the female as not only allowing for non-antagonistic contradiction but also
allowing for dialogical co-existence. The notion of non-antagonistic contradiction when worked out in greater detail can therefore add to the conceptual apparatus of Historical Materialism the notion of dialogical co-existence.

Human beings and Nature, the male and the female and different ethno-communities must dialogically co-exist. Dialogical co-existence leaves the possibility of disagreement, resistance and contestation (i.e. strife). Such a possibility is lost by merely considering class practices and dialectical transcendence. The loss of this possibility also places totalitarianism on the human agenda. Another word of caution is important here. I am not rejecting the importance of dialectical transcendence. As I mentioned earlier, my aim is to link dialectical transcendence and dialogical co-existence. To do this, non-class practices of the type I have mentioned above must be conceptually located in Historical Materialism. In this effort, Mao's ideas are extremely useful.

I propose a 'non-workerist' model of Historical Materialism. Non-workerist -- a term that has no distinguished genealogy but is, nevertheless, reflective of a possible trajectory of Historical Materialism -- does not imply a rejection of the working class. The importance of class practices is maintained throughout this work. The generation of
'universal structures' is taken to be the most important contribution of class practices. Without the emergence of these structures, dialogical co-existence, I argue, cannot assume an important or significant role in human social evolution. 'Non-workerist' really addresses the fact that the 'emancipatory subject' is a 'multi-self, multi-identity subject' constituted by class and non-class agents thrown up by the working class, feminist, ethno-communal/national and ecological movements. All these movements have assumed global dimensions and have intervened in historical processes.

I have attempted the reconstruction of Historical Materialism in four chapters. Specifically in the present introductory chapter, I have taken up Marx's notion of a communist future (or 'Utopia') as one in which all strife is undone, and questioned the basis of such a construction. In chapter two, I have attempted a reconstruction of the emancipatory subject and have proposed a multi-self, multi-identity emancipatory subject in order to make the notion more sensitive to non-class agents. In chapter three, the structures that actually shape everyday life experience are explored in order to arrive at a set of structural relationships that provide a ground for locating the multi-self, multi-identity emancipatory subject. This effort also
establishes a greater prominence for the non-class practices that shape everyday life and the emancipatory experience. The chapter on power, the fourth chapter, is one that contributes to reconceptualization of power. It points to a movement towards a dialogical reality between the non-class Self and the Other. In the concluding chapter I have sought to link the various aspects theoretically reconstructed in the previous chapters.

I begin this introductory chapter by looking at Marx’s Historical Materialism.

1.1. LABOUR AND CLASS

The opening line of The Communist Manifesto is perhaps the most perceptive line in the whole corpus of Marx’s writings about the nature and history of the world:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle.¹


This opening line refers to chapter one of the Manifesto. Though the tract is a collaboration, it was Marx who actually wrote it. It was an important landmark of a series of events in Marx’s life that led him to break away from the utopian socialists and other ‘petty bourgeois intellectuals’, like Proudhon, in order to present a consistent and coherent class critique of the capitalist social order. For an exposition of this see Georges Labica, Marxism and the Status of Philosophy, translated from the French by Kate Soper and Martin Ryle (Sussex: the Harvester Press, 1980), pp.334-339.

Something similar to the first line of the Manifesto is also mentioned in The German Ideology: ‘... this civil society is the true focus and theatre of all history...’

Class is **central** to Marxist theory and without it Marxism cannot be recognized as such or properly be defined.

2. This 'centrality' is assigned to class with the criterion of the mechanism of transformation (emancipation) in mind. My reformulation of the 'emancipatory subject' in the next chapter is related to this criterion. It must be kept in mind, however, that there are various schools of Marxism suggesting other mechanisms.

   'a) where emphasis is laid on the primacy of the productive forces (this has been labelled the 'mechanistic' or 'technological determinist' school);
   b) where there is argued to be a dialectical relationship between the forces of production and (other) elements in the social structure (we shall refer to this as the 'interactionist' school);
   c) where emphasis is laid on the economy as the driving force (we shall call the adherents of this position the 'economistic' school)...'


I will show why I believe in the centrality of class subsequently. However, I shall make a preliminary observation here through Lukacs. Lukacs writes 'The social preconditions of modern mechanized techniques thus arose first; they were the product of a centuries-long social revolution. The technique is the consummation of modern capitalism, not its initial cause'. (p.139) He also observes that, 'Slavery is not made possible by a low level of technique; rather slavery as a form of the domination of labour makes the nationalization of the labour process, and hence a rational technique, impossible.' (p.138).


3. Marxism will be used interchangeably with Historical Materialism. However, they are not the same. Historical

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as Marxism. It is therefore important for the present inquiry to begin with an effort to understand class in both philosophical and sociological terms, keeping in mind the importance to such an understanding of the category of labour.

1.1.1. First Order Mediation

Beneath the whole edifice of the visible social world and 'submerged' in consciousness through long social sedimentation of layer upon layer of human practices is a necessary condition for the possibility of human existence:

...labour is a creator of use-value, is useful labour, it is a necessary condition independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an external nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchange between man and Nature, and therefore no life.5 (underscoring mine.)

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Materialism is a tradition of social theory and social philosophy. As a tradition, Historical Materialism consists of many 'voices' or 'schools'. Thus, Marxism is really Marx's Historical Materialism. Of course, the Historical Materialism of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels presents its basic features.

4. Not merely the biological organism but also the social being.

Labour mediates between human beings and Nature. This is an 'ontologically fundamental self-mediation of man with Nature'. Labour is therefore the 'ontologically necessary


The relationship between human beings and Nature can be thought about in three distinct ways. C.J. Arthur elaborates on the first two relationships:

(i) Part-Whole Relationship
'... someone who argues that man is nothing but a part of nature, a natural being subject to natural laws, is taking the position that man is in immediate unity with nature.'

(ii) External Relationship
'... someone who takes a dualistic position, representing man as separate from the natural realm, developing himself spiritually, and struggling against the power of nature latent in himself as well as the influence of external determinants, is taking man to be immediately opposed to nature.'


In contrast to the above two positions, there is a third one.

(iii) Mediated Relationship
Mediated relationship is to be contrasted with both 'immediacy' (i) and 'duality' (ii). Mediation is an 'interceding' between adversaries, with a strong sense of reconciling them'. This reconciliation is not a 'neutral process of the interaction of separate forms, but an active process in which the form of the mediation alters the things mediated...'

See Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (London: Fontana, 1988), pp.204-205.

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"first order mediation" 7 In the process of mediation, labour objectifies. As Marx puts it, 'the sensuous external world... is the material on which [man's] labour is realized, in which it is active, from which and by means of which it produces [things].' 8 Thus the 'product of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labour.

The relationship of human beings with nature is self-mediating in a two-fold sense: 'First, because it is nature that mediates itself with itself in man. And secondly, because the mediating activity itself is nothing but man's attribute, located in a specific part of nature. Thus in productive activity [or Labour], under the first of its dual ontological aspects, nature mediates itself with nature, and, under its second ontological aspect - in virtue of the fact that productive activity is inherently social activity--man mediates himself with man'.

See Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p.82.

The 'strength of Marx's category of "productive activity" lies precisely in its double determination as the linking element between the human and the natural, the ideal and the material, teleology and causality. Productive activity is at the same time both a material interchange (the combination and transformation of raw materials into goods for human consumption) and a human social process -- whereby the cunning of human practice realizes its aims within the context of definite, historically determined and transformed, socio-economic relationship.' See C.J. Arthur, Dialectics of Labour, p.7.

7. See Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p.79.

Labour's realization is its objectification.'9

Objectification

...is essentially a 'social' activity, and objectifying man is basically 'social' man. The sphere of objects in which labour is performed is precisely the sphere of common life-activity: in and through the objects of labour, men are shown one another in their reality. The original forms of communication, the essential relationship of men to one another, were expressed in the common use, possession, desire, need and enjoyment, etc. of the objective world. All labour is labour with and for and against others, so that in it men first mutually reveal themselves for what they really are.10

As is obvious above, the essential relationship in society is achieved only through the 'externality of exchange',11 an externality 'created' by objectification of human labour. This sensuous unfolding of labour ruptures the 'integument' of animality to secrete humanity. And history.

The first historical act emerges out of the mediating property of labour. Four 'moments' constitute this first historical act:

9. Ibid., p.63.


(i) Before everything else we need to eat and to drink. We need to have a roof over our heads. And we need to clothe ourselves. Thus, a 'moment' of the 'first historical act is ... the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself'. This would mean the development of 'productive forces'.

(ii) 'the satisfaction of the first need, the action of satisfying and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired leads to new needs ...'

(iii) 'men, who daily re-create their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the family.'

(iv) 'a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of cooperation is itself a "productive force".'

13. Ibid., p.48.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p.49.
OBJECTIFICATION

LABOUR
(OR PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY)

DEVELOPMENT OF NEEDS

REPRODUCTION OF SOCIETY
(SOCIAL, BIOLOGICAL)

MODES OF COOPERATION
(DEPENDING ON THE MODE OF PRODUCTION)

HUMAN BEINGS

NATURE

FIG. - 1 FIRST ORDER MEDIATION AND THE FIRST HISTORICAL ACT

14
These 'four moments, four aspects of primary historical relations' are shown in figure 1.

It would be fruitful to dwell here a little more to grasp the dimensions of not only the four 'moments' of the first historical act but also labour's property of self-mediation with Nature.

Let us assume the shaping of an 'object'. And let us further assume that the hands are being used for the shaping of the 'object'. Labour's employment of the hand, a biological (in the physical sense) organ, actually transforms it. But into what?

The hand or any other biological organ is transformed into a concrete human organ by the relation of labour; the hand is a thingy organ which itself becomes an instrument in practice by labour, being transformed into an instrument of labour, by the acquisition of a concrete or abstract skill. The hand as instrument is the product of the human past, transformed from a biological organ by learning... the biological nature of the hand, brain or foot is not in itself the inner nature of the human being, as human, but is the biological nature of the foot, hand or

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. (See Figure 1.)

'Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of primary historical relations, do we find that man also possesses "consciousness".'
brain transformed into the human nature thereof by the mastery of human skills through human relations.18 (underscoring mine.)

Labour's shaping of the object transforms what is 'biological' (in the physical sense) into what is 'human'. However, labour's capacity to transform (through productive activity) is not solely confined to this creative intervention. Labour's activity also transforms Nature and brings into the world novel objects, objects not found in Nature. But what is this transformation for? And transformation into what? The transformation is for the satiation of human needs -- a moment of the first historical act. The second question takes us to the object - what is this object? It is 'use-value, Nature's material adapted by a change of form to the wants of man'.19 They 'serve directly as means of existence'.20 As is evident, it is the satiation of a real need that turns an object (or product) into a use-value.


...a dress becomes really a dress only by being worn ... in other words a product as distinct from a simple natural object manifests itself as a product, becomes a product, only in consumption. It is only consumption which, by destroying the product, gives it the finishing touch, for the product is a product, not because it is materialized activity, but only in so far as it is an object for the active subject.21

The becoming of a product and its 'destruction'22 by conscious consumption by an active subject creates an 'internal pressure' that translates itself into two internally linked movements. On the one hand, there is the development of real, human needs and on the other, there is an increase in productive activity (of labour). Mediated by labour, society moves. And it moves on a universalizing temporality.

In the process of shaping an object (or product), i.e. a use-value, labour through this sensuous creative activity, introduces the human experience of the Other as difference, of place and of time. I shall consider only time here. Labour's transformative activity does not imply a negation of the material it works with, but it does imply a determinate negation. Marx writing on use-value and the

21. Ibid., p.196.

22. 'Destruction' is used in the Hegelian sense of 'sublation'.
transformation activity of labour provides an insight into
the 'process' of determinate negation:

As regards use value, labour has the property of preserving the existing use value by raising it, and it raises it by making it into the object of new labour as defined by an ultimate aim...23
(underscoring mine.)

Carol Gould elaborates this insight of Marx in the following manner:

...the activity of labour, which is the foundation of time, is the activity of changing things. To change something or to make an object, as we have seen, is a process in which the past or what comes before is subsumed or preserved in the present and is therefore not simply 'left behind'. Thus there is no sharp demarcation in this activity of creation between 'what has been and is no longer' and what is now. On the other hand, since the made object is an intentional object and its presentness projects it as something to be used in the future, there is no sharp demarcation between the now and what is not yet.24

Underlying the creation of the 'body of labour'25, the object, a novelty in the world of natural objects, a use-value in the human world, is productive activity (i.e. the self-mediating activity of human beings with Nature). This activity is the ground for the dialectical interconnection

of the past, present and future as a process of time.\textsuperscript{26} Labour creates time and introduces it into the world.

The already created object (the hypothetical situation from which we have started this elaboration), which is the past, and its intentional transformability into a new one, which is the future, is a given possibility of the present, behind which productive activity or labour is active. It is out of this activity the human world is born. Human reality is not given and the \textit{biological} (in the physical sense) does not as such constitute the \textit{human} world. It is a world actively \textit{produced} by labour's property of mediation. Everything human has to be produced and this also includes \textit{human nature}. Human nature is not 'biological nature' (biological in the physical sense).

The Marxian 'self-mediated being of nature and of man' - man who is not the animal counterpart of a set of abstract moral ideals - is by nature neither good, nor evil; neither benevolent nor malevolent; neither altruistic nor egoistic; neither sublime nor a beast; etc., but simply a natural being whose attribute is: 'self-mediating'. This means that he can \textit{make} himself become what he is at any given time -- in accordance with the prevailing circumstances -- whether egoistic or otherwise.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{26} Carol C. Gould, \textit{Marx's Social Ontology}, p.58.
\textsuperscript{27} Istvan Meszaros, \textit{Marx's Theory of Alienation}, p.164.
\end{flushleft}

This conception is contrary to those that create an unresolvable abyss between human beings and Nature. As Contd/---
Meszaros makes a further clarification of our present attempt by adding that

Nothing is therefore 'implanted in human nature'. Human nature is not something fixed by nature, but, on the contrary, a 'nature' which is made by man in his acts of 'self-transcendence' as a natural being. It goes without saying that human beings -- due to their natural-biological constitution -- have appetites and various natural propensities. But in the 'conscious self-transcending act of coming-to-be' they must become human appetites and propensities, fundamentally changing their character by being transformed into something inherently historical.28

There is only one defining generic characteristic of human nature. The essence of human nature in its reality 'is the ensemble of the social relations'.29 This could only mean sociality, an important property of one moment of the first historical act. Sociality 'cannot be an abstract quality inherent in the single individual (like 'egoism'). It can only exist in the relations of individuals with each

Meszaros writes, 'One of the basic contradictions of theories which idealize the unmediated reciprocity between "Man" and "Nature" is that they get themselves into the impasse of this animal relationship from which not a single feature of the dynamism of human history can be derived. Then, in an attempt to get rid of this contradiction - in order to be able to account for the specifically human characteristics - they are forced to assume a "ready-made human nature"...' (p.105).

28. Ibid., p.170.


This is the sixth thesis of the 'Theses on Feuerbach'.
other'. Human nature is made in and through social relations between human beings organized to express their 'life activity' i.e. the 'self-mediation of man with Nature' through labour (or productive activity). The character of the 'life activity', determines the character of the species.

The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity.

Therefore, the 'whole character of a species -- its species-character -- is contained in the character of its life activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species-character'. Human nature is, therefore, 'condemned' to be governed by free, conscious activity.


31. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p.68.

32. Ibid.
To conclude this part, we have so far dealt with the subtle and interlinked dimensions of the 'self-mediation of man with Nature', the dimensions of the transhistorical33 first-order mediation.

1.1.2. Second Order Mediation

To proceed with this elaboration let us locate ourselves in the 'present'.34 It is part of Marx's strong, methodological belief that what is 'present' holds the key to the understanding of the past - 'Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape'.35 With this understanding, let me present the following observation/analysis of Marx of an important development characteristic of the present.

... labour is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but

33. Transhistorical phenomena do not figure directly or elaborately in Marx's analysis and quite understandably so. He was concerned with social trans-formation. I have used the term transhistorical to differentiate it from another term, ahistorical. These two terms mean different things. I have addressed and elaborated on the notion of transhistoricity in Marx in chapter three, sub-section 3.1.3.

34. This is strictly Marx's 'present'; a little more flexibly 'ours'. To be specific it was a period when industrial capitalism was taking shape aggressively. We can say that we live in a capitalist age.

unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another... [thus] it is the loss of his self.36

If the above is the condition that has come to be, how has it come about? How did the 'self-mediation of man with Nature' through sensuous, self-fulfilling labour (or productive activity) transform into a situation in which what s/he produced appeared as alien? If we want an answer to this question we need to look at productive activity (or labour) a little more closely.

Labour (or productive activity), as was shown above, objectifies. The objects it creates are 'bodies of labour'. The objectification of labour is conceivable in two

senses. One is 'ontological' and (this also has a transhistorical sense) the other is 'historical'. In the ontological sense, objectification means labour and its creations i.e., bodies of labour, are organically linked through needs which are internal to labour -- Labour is in an important sense the Need of needs, and is itself a need. In the historical sense, labour and the objects of its creation i.e. the 'bodies of labour' become alien to each other along with needs becoming external to labour. 'Bodies of Labour' assume an alien independence; labour becomes alienated. Alienation is the historically specific expression of objectification. It is objectification's specific historical sense.37

37. 'Marx's explanation of why such alienation occurs is, however, Hegelian. An unalienated existence can occur only if man 'really brings out all his species-powers ... and treats these powers as objects: and this, to begin with, is again only possible in the form of estrangement'. In other words, alienation is a necessary prelude to the establishment of a truly human society. As in Hegel, the subject can only become conscious of itself after a period of internal division, in which its powers are developed in the form of alien objects; alienation is transcended when the subject recognizes these objects as its own and resumes them back into itself, enriched by the diversity it created when estranged from itself. The structure of the process is the same in both Marx and Hegel: original unity, self-estrangement, reconciliation in a higher unity'.


See also Marx's 'Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole' in Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p.132.
To put it differently, alienation is 'a "mediation of mediation", i.e. a historically specific mediation of the ontologically fundamental self-mediation of man with nature. This "second order mediation" can only arise on the basis of the ontologically necessary "first order mediation" - as the specific, alienated form of the latter.'

"How ... does man come to alienate, to estrange, his labour? How is this estrangement rooted in the nature of human development?" If labour is alienated, what happens to it? What does it become? If it does not any longer belong to

38. Istvan Meszaros, Marx's Theory of Alienation, p.79.

39. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p.73.

Alienation and estrangement do not have identical meanings. Alienation 'refers to the renunciation or relinquishment of possession, or of a claim to something, or of a liberty or power to do some action -- usually, but not necessarily, in favour of some other person or persons specified or unspecified'. (p.xi.)

'Unlike the sense of "alienation", just considered, which refers only to actions, not emotions, estrangement refers in the first place to how people feel about one another and describes the affective tone or texture of a relationship, or the direction in which its emotional content is changing.... For "estrangement" has as its core the idea of people treating each other as strangers, whereas "alienation" includes this but also extends to the extremes of enmity'. (p.xiii.)

the direct producers, who has possession of it? Let us address these questions by locating ourselves in the 'present'.

One of the most visible aspect of the economy is the sphere of exchange. In this sphere, 'commodities' are exchanged though not by those who actually produced them. This is a given historical fact. On what ground are commodities exchanged? We say that commodities have 'exchange-values' and that it is this exchange-value that allows exchangeability, say, of linen and soaps. We may further write that,

\[ X \text{ linen} = Y \text{ soaps} \]

On what ground is this equality achieved?

It must be kept in mind that this 'form' of exchange is hardly the following type. If I have produced linen and I need soap and if you have soap and need linen, we exchange. This may take place directly or indirectly but at the beginning and at the end of the circuit what you have is an object (or product) of direct consumption. Use-values, are exchanged according to needs. But this is not the kind of exchange we are at the moment elaborating, which is the form of exchange that goes on in the 'present' social order.
Let us look at the equation again:

\[ X \text{ linen} = Y \text{ soaps} \]

The equation of the two products is possible only if there is some measure that can be found equally distributed on the 'left hand side' and the 'right hand side' of the equation. The equation is possible only if the 'amount of labour'\(^{40}\) that is used up to make \(X\) linen and the 'amount of labour' that goes on to make \(Y\) soaps are equal. This 'amount of labour' cannot be the individually different kinds of labour that went in to make linen or soaps, that is, that went in to make use-values. Such labour is incommensurable. The 'amount of labour' we are talking about must be something homogeneous i.e. 'labour in which the individual characteristics of the workers are obliterated'\(^{41}\) (underscoring mine) and 'reduced to uniform, homogeneous, simple labour, in short to labour of uniform quality, whose only difference, therefore, is quantity'.\(^{42}\) Thus, 'Labour which creates exchange-value is ... abstract general labour'.\(^{43}\) Marx called this Labour-power. This is the

\begin{itemize}
  \item [40.] Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p.31.
  \item [41.] Ibid., p.29.
  \item [42.] Ibid., p.30.
  \item [43.] Ibid., p.29.
\end{itemize}
'capacity for labour... the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description'.44 It is 'human labour in general'.45 And it is 'specifically social labour'.46

Human beings through self-mediation with Nature produce use-values. But in the present society what has happened is that human beings do not just produce use-values but also exchange-values. This exchange value is produced by 'abstract labour'. It is strictly a social substance. The exchange value is not produced at the level of exchange. Since it is really 'abstract labour' it is produced at the level of production.47 The sphere of production is the

44. Karl Marx, Capital I, p.164.
45. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p.31.
46. Ibid., p.30.
47. Production and exchange are two important moments in a complex of four moments - production, distribution, exchange and consumption - comprising the production process. The explanation of the economic phenomenon remained at the level of exchange and circulation and did not take the production level seriously. Exchange-values were thought to be produced at the level of exchange not production. The neglect of the level of production concealed alienation. Political economy did not consider 'the direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production'. It took private property as given. It became an understanding that 'merely formulated the laws of estranged labour'.

See Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p.65,72.
source of values, both use and exchange-values. How is exchange-value produced?

... the exercise of labour power, labour, is the worker's own life-activity, the manifestation of his own life. And this life-activity he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary means of subsistence. Thus his life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live. He does not even reckon labour as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. It is a commodity which he has made over to another. Hence, also, the product of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace he builds.48

In the previous forms of society people had 'bought' and 'sold'. These were commodities. However, it is only in the present social arrangement, the present social order that the worker sells his/her life activity. The worker sells labour power. The alienated labour is no more the worker's. It is an external force assuming an alien character. This alien character of labour is nothing but private property.49 It is this alienated labour that


49. (a) The first form of property 'lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband'. The labour-power of the wife and children was appropriated by the husband. From this beginning, we have had tribal property, ancient communal and slave property, feudal property and, finally, today we have
comes to be organized as 'objectivity' - the second order mediation and its institutional media. Workers now do not relate themselves directly. Their relationship with themselves, with others and with Nature is mediated by the second order mediation i.e. private property and its institutional media. The essence of this relationship is marked by alienation. For the objectivity that comes to be formed on the basis of private property, which is nothing but alienated labour, is an objectivity that has come to assume an 'independence' and a 'naturalness' controlling and governing human lives instead of the reverse.

It is time we got a little closer sociologically.

If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong?
If my own activity does not belong to me,

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capitalist property - capital. Capital is an ever-increasing form of property. And it is the most abstract. (b) '...capital has one single life impulse, tendency to create value and surplus-value, to make its constant factor, the means of production, absorb the greatest possible amount of surplus-labour. Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks'.

(a) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, p.52. Also see pp.38-39.

(b) Karl Marx, Capital I, p.224.

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if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong? To a being other than myself. Who is this being? 

In *Capital I*, an insightful but moving answer is given:

He, who before was the money-owner now strides in front as capitalist; the possessor of labour-power follows as his labourer. The one with an air of importance, smirking, intent on business; the other, timid and holding back, like one who is bringing his own hide to market and has nothing to expect but - a hiding.

This observation about 'present', capitalist social order brings forth an overwhelmingly important social reality and for Marx, the motive force of history, the reality of classes. Classes are alienated labour resolved into 'two components which depend on one another, or which are but different expressions of one and the same relationship.'

(underscoring mine.) In the capitalist social order, the two components are capital and labour, 'capital' being the most modern form of private property.

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This is an important insight. Classes are ultimately 'distinctions of the Same' (alienated labour).
Capital and labour (representing the two classes, the capitalist and the proletariat) are internally linked but in a particular, definite manner making possible the movement of societies.

... the opposite of capital cannot itself be a particular commodity, for as such it would form no opposition to capital, since the substance of capital is itself use value; it is not this commodity or that commodity, but all commodities. The communal substance of all commodities, i.e. their substance not as material stuff, as physical character, but their communal substance as commodities and hence exchange values, is this, that they are objectified labour. The only thing distinct from objectified labour is non-objectified labour, labour which is still objectifying itself, labour as subjectivity. Or, objectified labour, i.e. labour which is present in space, can also be opposed, as part labour, to labour which is present in time. If it is to be present in time, alive, then it can be present only as the living subject, in which it exists as capacity, as possibility; hence as worker. The only use value, therefore, which can form the opposite pole to capital is labour....

As the passage shows, capital and labour are not just related to each other but are antagonistically related to each other. The classes they represent, the capitalist and the proletariat, are ever in struggle. This has been so throughout human history.

The very moment civilization begins, production begins to be founded on the antagonism of orders, estates, classes, and finally on the antagonism of

accumulated labour [i.e. capital] and immediate labour. No antagonism, no progress. This is the law that civilization has followed up to our days. Till now the productive forces have been developed by virtue of this system of class antagonisms.\footnote{Karl Marx, 'The Poverty of Philosophy' in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Collected Works, Vol.6: 1845-48 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1984), p.132.} (Underscoring mine.)

In \textit{The Communist Manifesto}, Marx presents the fact of class struggle more sharply.

Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.\footnote{Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, \textit{The Communist Manifesto}, p.79.}

The relation between classes otherwise termed as social relations of production\footnote{Karl Marx, 'Poverty of Philosophy', p.165.} is of pivotal importance in understanding any society.

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a
legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.57

The relations of production is total social space. Every person inhabiting any society is part of this space and is therefore structurally assigned a position in the economic structure, which is the totality of relations of production. This location in the economic structure 'determines' the class consciousness and culture of the person, a person who is formed as a person only in and through these relations.

Analytically, the two classes i.e. the capitalist and the proletariat confront each other at various levels in a capitalist society. The capitalist, owner of capital, and owner, therefore, of alienated labour extracts through the exploitative relations of production, which organizes production, more labour-power, and therefore more capital, from the proletariat. This exploitative relationship places on agenda class struggle. Class struggle secretes the political in society. For it is only on the political terrain that the struggle between classes is expressed as class struggle.

57. Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p.20. (Preface)
THE ENIGMATIC "INDEPENDENT" WORLD OF COMMODITIES

DESOCIETALIZED COMMUNITY (ALIENATED) INDIVIDUALS; INCLUDES PRODUCERS

SPHERE OF CIRCULATION OF COMMODITIES

CITIZENS

STATE [ILLUSORY (POLITICAL) COMMUNITY]

FIG. - 2 DESOCIETALIZATION AND THE CONCEPTION OF ILLUSORY COMMUNITIES
Before I proceed, let me dwell here on the kind of society that has come to take root and the kind of 'communities' that have come into being. There is a sense in which we can say that the coming of capitalist society 'desocializes' the human community. Society is, to begin with, atomized. Individual beings sell labour. The atomized, individuated individuals are not 'left alone' after this; they are 'reconstituted'. Reconstitution takes place on two terrains and both are 'illusory'. On one terrain, the relationship between commodities replaces the relationship between direct producers. This is the 'community' of commodities. See figure 2.

58. The relationship between producers is mediated through the oppressive structures of the capitalist market. In that arena there is a fundamental reversal of reality: The living dies in its living and the dead lives. This reversal peripheralizes people and sets the stage for commodities to relate to each other. This is one level of the 'illusion'. The other level is the State. As Bertell Ollman writes, 'The state is an illusory community because it represents the domination of one class over another, in which all political forms are fetters...on the subjugated peoples. It represents an illusory "general interest"...'


See also Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, p.52.

This notion of 'illusion' has to be taken with a little caution. The coming of capitalism introduces a formal space of social universality in terms of politics. Marx considers this a positive development. I have elaborated on this aspect in chapter four.
On another terrain, a community comes into being in the form of the 'state'. The human community is first resolved into individual units. These atomized, individuated beings are abstract beings. In the process of reconstitution into a community they are 'standardized' and assigned rights. They are then reconstituted into a 'community' on the political terrain, a community of individuated beings who are seemingly equal. The standardization is a tendency that is extremely important to the capitalist social order for it is the way in which it can 'construct' a society with brutalized beings whose thought and behaviour it can predict, manage and control.

Historically, the concretization of the above processes indicates the ripping apart of the political from the economic.

The political revolution thereby abolished the political character of civil society. It broke up civil society into its simple component parts; on the one hand, the individuals; on the other hand, the material and spiritual elements constituting the content of the life and social position of these individuals. It sets free the political spirit, which has been, as it were, split up, partitioned and dispersed in the various blind alleys of feudal society. It gathered the dispersed parts of the political spirit, freed it from its intermixture with civil life [broadly the economic structure], and established it as the sphere of the community, the general concern of the nation, ideally independent of those particular elements of civil life.59

Why is the impersonal attempt of the capitalist social order to form a community 'illusory'? It is illusory because the community that is sought to be created is a mere abstraction operating at the political superstructural level. There is structural inequality and no 'real' community at the level of the prime activity of human beings. The community of commodities is a community of things, not of human beings. There is in effect really no equality, freedom or community. The exploitative relationship, the desocietalization and dehumanization all show up in society. And they also become expressed in class conflicts.

Such conflicts can reach a state when the continued 'reproduction' of the society, that is, the continued capacity of one class to extract surplus labour from another through a historically-specific and definite relations of production is made very difficult, if not impossible. The prevailing relations rupture and a new relations of production emerge. A new mode of exploitation also emerges.60 However, in the capitalist society, the

60. Exploitation is an important notion in Marxist theory. In fact the 'labour theory of value' cannot be conceived without such a notion. More broadly, the notion of accumulation cannot be sustained without the notion of exploitation. Though I have not taken up this notion systematically, the 'social structure of accumulation' that I have discussed in chapter three allows a theoretical space for it.

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structural conflict between the capitalist and the proletariat leads to the dissolution of private property and the impossibility of organizing society on a class basis.

How does this situation come to be? In his description of the proletariat, Marx writes:

It is true that labour produces wonderful things for the rich -- but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces -- but for the workers, hovels. It produces beauty -- but for the worker, deformity. It replaces labour by machines, but it throws one section of the workers back to a barbarous type of labour, and it turns the other section into a machine. It produces intelligence -- but for the worker, stupidity, cretinism.61

For classes to disappear instead of reappearing in another form, Marx’s description above becomes an important consideration when he writes that

... in the formation of a class with radical chains, a class in civil society that is not a class of civil society, of a social group that is the dissolution of all social groups, of a sphere that has a universal character because of its universal sufferings and lays claim to no particular right, because it is the object of no

The nature of exploitation changes with the change in the mode of production. Thus, for instance, capitalist exploitation is economic coercion mediated by the capitalist market. In slavery, exploitation took a physical form. Thus, exploitation can be achieved through physical, non-economic and economic coercion.

particular injustice but of injustice in general. This class can no longer lay claim to a historical status, but only to a human one....It is, finally, a sphere that cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating these other spheres themselves. In a word, it is the complete loss of humanity and thus can only recover itself by a complete redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society, as a particular class, is the proletariat.62

Marx strongly believed that the world was breaking up into two great classes - the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.63

The proletariat is in the process of becoming the universal class. This potentiality arises from the tendency of capital to globalize - 'It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere'.64 It

62. 'Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction' in Karl Marx, Selected Writings, pp.72-73.


64. Ibid., p.83.

Marx presents three cardinal facts of capitalist production. They are:
(i) Concentration of means of production in few hands, whereby they cease to appear as the property of the immediate labourers and turn into social production capacities. Even if initially they are the private property of capitalists. These are the trustees of bourgeois society, but they pocket all the proceeds of this trusteeship.
(ii) Organization of labour itself into social labour: through cooperation, division of labour, and the uniting of labour with the natural sciences.

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'batters down all Chinese walls' and ties up the world structurally. The socio-structural basis of universality is established by the dialectics of capital and labour. As a result, the proletariat become 'world-historical, empirically universal individuals' and they replace the local ones. It is only this class that is capable of transforming a society that has created a commodity of human beings. As Marcuse puts it,

...it is only in labour and in the objects of his labour that man can really come to understand himself, others and the objective world in their historical and social situation, the master, as a non-worker, cannot come to this insight. Since what is actually a specific human activity appears to him as a material and objective state of affairs, the worker has an (as it were) irreducible advantage over him. He is the real factor of transformation; the destruction of reification can only be his work. The master can only come to this revolutionary insight if he becomes a worker, which, however, would mean transcending his own essence.

(iii) Creation of the world-market.

It is the last cardinal fact that draws the world together and sets the stage for universal structures to emerge.

See Karl Marx, Capital III (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1959) p.266.

65. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Communist Manifesto, p.84.


67. Herbert Marcuse, From Luther to Popper, p. 39.
Transcendence would really mean the abolition of private property, which is 'stolen' social labour. And this social labour 'is an aggregate, concretely universal' and it 'must be distributed [to all in society] in definite proportion'. 68

In the capitalist social order 'commodity economy labour is not directly social labour because production and circulation are fragmented into numerous discrete enterprises and transactions' and in which every producer, atomized, operates 'formally, independently of the others', 69 only becoming social indirectly through the second order mediation. In the transformed society 'labour is directly social labour because it is distributed and regulated through a social plan'. 70

In the post-revolutionary society, 'the universality of labour is immediately identical with the sociality of labour' 71 and this 'universality exists as a pre-given totality to be apportioned' 72 This 'pre-given totality' 73.


69. Ibid., p.97.

70. Ibid., pp.96-97.

71. Ibid., p.98.

72. Ibid., p.99.
is transformed into what we may understand as Common Property Resource of a particular kind. It becomes available for all without itself diminishing, much like air. Such a situation, where the second order mediation is deconstituted, labour and its creations (in this case the socially objectified world) i.e. the 'subject' and 'object' of history, become 'a distinction without difference'.

The reified institutional media that was raised upon the second-order mediation that alienated human being from themselves, from others like themselves and from Nature, is destroyed.

Religion, family, state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are only particular modes of production, and fall under its general law. The positive transcendance of private property as the appropriation of human life, is therefore the positive transcendance of all estrangement -- that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e., social, existence.

The destruction of the second order mediation cleanses 'the social' of all institutional forms and the division of labour and takes humanity to a new social 'arrangement' - Communism.

73. Karl Marx, Grundrisse, p. 260. Marx uses the phrase in a different but indirectly related context.

74. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosopohic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 91.
Communism ...[is] ... the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being -- a return accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man - the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.75

The supersession of private property and the re-appropriation of alienated labour by society sets the stage for Communism - for the development of human qualities. 'The abolition (supersession) of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and qualities, but it is this emancipation precisely because these senses and attributes have become, subjectively and objectively, human. The eye has become a human eye, just as its object has become a social, human object -- an object made by man for man'.76

Marx goes on further...

...it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers -- human reality, and for that

75. Ibid., p.90.

76. Ibid., pp. 94-95.
reason the reality of his own essential powers — that all objects become for him the objectification of himself, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become his objects: that is, man himself becomes the object.77

Human beings in a classless society become the subject and object of history. All mediation — the economy and the political — subverting humanity through the brutalizing experience of alienation are removed.

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour, has vanished; after labour has become not only a means of life but life’s prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly — only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!78

1.2. GENERAL CRITICISMS OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

The above section on ‘Labour and Class’ which was considered in both philosophical and sociological terms was to categorically state the sound ground on which Marxism has

77. Ibid., p.95.

78. ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’ in Karl Marx, Selected Writings, p.569.
been 'placed' and the unquestionable importance of the notion of class to a critique of contemporary class societies.

Inspite of Marxism's critical consciousness of class, this 19th century social philosophy and theory of history and society has been put to a great deal of stress and strain in modern times. The growing ethno-communal/national, feminist, peace and ecological movements,79 the 'breakdown' of living socialist societies and the sheer reproductive capability of the capitalist social order, to mention a few broad aspects of contemporary society, have resulted in a sensitive effort to reconsider some aspects of the Marxist theory of history and society. For instance, can class really explain everything that is going on today at the social and cultural levels? Can all conflicts really be overcome for all times? Who is the emancipatory subject of history? The feminists? The ecological activists? The

79. The working class movement is no more the only 'world-historical' movement. The feminist, the ethno-communal/national and ecological movements have also assumed global dimensions. The emancipatory experience, thus, seems to be 'decentered'. This 'decentering' of the emancipatory experience places an immense strain on Marxist theory and demands a reconstruction of the 'emancipatory subject'. Such a reconstruction must take note of the two senses of 'world-historical-ness' - one sense implies a dialectical transcendence and the other implies a dialogical co-evolution.
lumpen-proletariat?80 The tribals?81 Or, all rolled into one?

Over the years a large number of 'Marxisms'82 have emerged. Serious doubts have been cast on some of the most important aspects of Marx's social theory. For instance, G.A. Cohen83 and Cornelius Castoriadis84 have questioned the 'labour theory of value'. Added to this, strong reactions have also emerged:


81. For many communist activists in India, tribals are a revolutionary group.


The economism and materialism of Marxism frustrate revolutionary potential by relegating these factors to roles subordinate to economic and technological development. Marxism stands in the way of revolutionary action necessary to change the course of history. And not by changing the course of history from that which beckons, only by opposing the historical direction of capitalist and socialist development, can we hope to arrive at a truly libertarian communist society.85

Of course criticisms can be made from many platforms but the two obvious ones are the 'for' and 'against' - arguments. Criticisms proving the inherent uselessness of Marxism are a sprawling scholarship. For these scholars, all this while, 'a spectre was haunting the academia -the spectre of Marxism'. And today there is a sigh of relief because the spectre has just had the fright of its life in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

I have here attempted a criticism. However, I have not made this criticism because I think Marxism is a monstrous theory or 'a monstrous guide to public policy'.86 I make it with a firm belief that the emergence of 'reflexivity' and 'criticality' in the sciences in general and social sciences in particular have been made possible by Marxism. That science should serve the affairs of all people, that it

should evolve from them, get corrected and refined by them and their practices, and that it should guide their action is a principle built into Marxism. If nothing is going to save us from our self-brutalization and perhaps our careless demise as a social species, at least 'reflexivity' and 'criticality' will give us some hope to believe that such a demise can be averted.

In the sections below, I take up two general but very significant criticisms of Historical Materialism. The first criticism pertains to the notion of communism in Marx. I have contested the way Marx has constructed this notion of a 'utopian' future. The second criticism pertains to the claim that the relations of production completely constitutes the social space. By attempting the first criticism, I intend to clear considerable theoretical space for myself to reconstruct Historical Materialism. As I have mentioned above, in this act Mao's notions offer a broad conceptual guide. By attempting the second criticism, I intend to show here briefly the complex nature of the realities that constitute our social space (this will be elaborated in greater detail in chapter three on 'Everyday Life').

1.2.1. Can All Conflicts be Resolved?

The triadic dialectical movement from 'primitive' communism to 'advanced' communism through historically specific class
formations -- the Asiatic, ancient, feudal and modern bourgeois\textsuperscript{87} -- results in the resolution of all conflicts in society.

This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man - the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.\textsuperscript{88}

(In short, I shall refer to this quote as $S_1$ below).

For the moment, let us keep $S_1$ at the back of our mind and consider the following question at some length: \textsc{under what social conditions will all conflicts be resolved?} Let me enumerate these conditions:

1.2.1.1. A Society of 'Perfect Unity' (a society with no difference at all);
1.2.1.2. Structurelessness; and
1.2.1.3. State of Abundance (no scarcity).

Now, let me examine these conditions, one by one.

\textsuperscript{87} Karl Marx, \textit{A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy}, p.21. (Preface)

\textsuperscript{88} Karl Marx, \textit{Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844}, p.90.
1.2.1.1. A Society of 'Perfect Unity'

Unity in the context of our experience of society can be thought about in three distinct ways:
(i) Good Unity;
(ii) Bad Unity; and
(iii) Non-unity (the Other of the former two).

I shall start from the last.

(i) Non-Unity

The 'non-unity' formation is absolute, 'total' pluralism, a continuous rupturing of the social and the cultural realities until the atomization reaches its 'outer limit' - the individual. Every one is an island and this formation is the 'war-of-all-against-all' position. Thus, if there are 100 individuals, there will be 100 individual, non-integrated positions. This is simple and straight-forward anarchy. Society will be impossible in such a situation and since society is a living fact, the non-unity is a non-entity. It is fictitious.89

89. A society undergoing a chronic social crisis may be faced with an anarchic situation. But anarchy here does not mean that the society is in the grip of progressive...
(ii) **Bad Unity**

The bad unity is one that seeks to control or destroy plural realities and homogenize. All differences are extinguished by physical and *symbolic violence*.\(^9\) The bad unity is a terroristic whole akin to that described by Herbert Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*. The bad unity as a formation attempts to 'manufacture' a creature that is easy to predict and therefore easy to manage, for standardization grants predictability and control.

(iii) **Good Unity**

A self-conscious unity and one that achieves its self-consciousness only in plurality; a self-

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conscious plurality and one that achieves its self-consciousness only in unity. It is a unity which in its full elaboration is plurality and it is a plurality which in its full elaboration is unity. Unity posits plurality; plurality posits unity.

Given these three conceptions let us reject (ii) and look at (i) more closely. The kind of formation (ii) implies is one in which a state of unity is maintained by a terroristic content. And since we work with an underlying notion of democracy, it is difficult to sustain (ii). But let us keep in mind that it is a potentiality of contemporary reality.91

91. George Orwell gives an excellent description of such a unity.

'Do you begin to see, then, what kind of world we are creating? It is the exact opposite of the stupid hedonistic Utopias that the old reformers imagined. A world of fear and treachery is torment, a world of trampling and being trampled upon, a world which will grow not less but more merciless as it refines itself. Progress in our world will be progress towards more pain. The old civilizations claimed that they were founded on love and justice. Ours is founded upon hatred.... We have cut the links between child and parent, and between man and man, and between man and woman. No one dares trust a wife or a child or a friend any longer. But in the future there will be no wives and no friends. Children will be taken from their mothers at birth, as one takes eggs from a hen. The sex instinct will be eradicated. Procreation will be an annual formality like the renewal of a ration card. We shall abolish the orgasm... There will be no love, except the love of Big Brother. There will be

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The Good Unity i.e. (i) is the kind of unity that is closest to Marx's writing on communism. The 'plurality' is conscious of its essential 'unity' and the 'unity' is conscious of its essential 'plurality'. This is, of course, achieved first at the level of production in the Marxian understanding. As Cornelius Castoriadis writes

... the Different [individual form of labour] is no more than a form of the Identical, [the pre-given totality existing as social labour], and the Other is reduced to the Same; and this is so precisely to the extent that Economy imposes and assures the triumph of the form of Equivalence, to the extent that it regards two things as no laughter, except the length of triumph over a defeated enemy. There will be no art, no literature, no science. When we are omnipotent we shall have no need of science. There will be no distinction between beauty and ugliness. There will be no curiosity, no enjoyment of the progress of life. All competing pleasure will be destroyed.... If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- forever.


Stalinist Russia and the Pol Pot Regime in Kampuchea are two real life examples close to what has been depicted by Orwell. I have chosen these examples and not others in the capitalist part of the world because the two represent a certain corruption of the future society that figures in Marxism. Incidentally the 'theoreticians' of the Pol Pot Regime were influenced by Stalinism. For an exposition see Ben Kiernan, 'Kampuchea and Stalinism' in Colin Mackerras and Nick Knight (eds.), Marxism in Asia (New Delhi: Selectbook Service, 1986), pp.232-250.
essentially the same so long as they have the 'same value', and thus the heterogeneity of objects and men as reducible to purely quantitative differences.92

Let us consider this point a little more in detail. We began with the discussion of a condition that will remove all conflicts in society. The condition we are presently discussing removes all differences in society by making them distinctions of the Same (social universality). We consider this from Marx's belief that the different forms of labour and, therefore, the source of all differences in society can be overcome by making a 'distribution' of labour that creates 'proportionate equality'93 leading to a living situation of distributive justice. If all labour can be reduced to the Same, such a situation described above can be achieved. Now, is this possible?

To answer the above question, let us look at Common Property Resources.94 Talking in global terms, there are two types of resources -- renewable and non-renewable. Of the


93. This is proposed to contrast it with arithmetical equality, which would actually create inequality. See, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' Karl Marx, Selected Writings, pp.564-570.

94. There are two types of property -- private and common. Common property consists of two types. One type of Contd/
renewable resources, we have those that need to be continuously replenished (like, say, the forest or fish stock) and those that need no such intervention, such as air. Amongst the resources -- renewable and non-renewable -- two types can be identified. One must be shared and the other, because of its sheer abundance and 'auto-renewability' need not be shared. People can use it 'according to their needs'. Air is such a natural resource. Different bodily constitutions and therefore different volumes of intake do not create any conflict. There is enough air.

Let us come back. Suppose labour can be thought of in terms of a Common Property Resource that is in abundance and is 'auto-renewable'. This means we can use it without it really diminishing. If we are to take Marx's statement in the 'Critique of the Gotha Programme' seriously, i.e. 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!', then it can be done only if we consider labour as

common property is social in nature. Parks, roads, transport system, etc., are public property i.e. they are used as common property. The other type of common property is what yields natural resources. This include among other things air, water, ores, mineral fuels, animals, rivers and streams, and forests. I use the idea of common property to mean one set of the second type.
a particular kind of Common Property Resource. But can 'labour' be so thought? And is this faithful to Marx's understanding? Let us go to what Marx said of communism i.e. to S1:

This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism, equals naturalism...

The humanization of nature through productive activity is the transformation of nature to human needs. It is the human becoming of nature. It is a becoming that not only brings novel things into the world, not out of nothing but out of nature, for human beings are as much nature; it is also a becoming that transforms labour into an abundantly available natural substance, available to all. Labour in communism will be transformed into a Common Property Resource which all of us can use without it diminishing because of its auto-renewable capacity, much like the air we breathe. This state i.e. 'fully developed humanism and fully developed naturalism' is conflict-free as it operates on 'to-each-according-to-his needs' principle.

This situation breaks down the primary source of difference in society which leads to a breakdown of all differences in society. To substantiate, Marx believed that
For as soon as the division of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; whereas in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.95

I shall question this 'image' of the communist future elsewhere but even inspite of allowing this 'claim', there are still problems with the conception of labour as Common Property Resource in which differences among people will be extinguished and turned into a mere distinction of the Same. Only if it is conceived in this way can we argue for a conflictless future.

Let us re-examine this point. Can labour be thought of as an auto-renewable abundant common resource that will not diminish, much like air? If this is true, we have no conflicts. If it is not true, we cannot avoid conflicts. There is an unbridgeable difference between air and labour. The eventual difference is this. The former will not diminish when consumed; the latter will. It is a resource like the forest or fish stocks in the ocean -

common but depletable. The one people can partake of according to their needs, the other they must share to meet their needs. The former common resource is participable, to use Castoriadis' term\textsuperscript{96}; the latter is only shareable. It has to be divided.

Marx's understanding is predicated on the fact that labour is something participable in a communist society. By doing so, Marx has masked a very serious problem. What is to be shared is taken to be what is participable. In effect, the problem of individual-individual, individual-collective, individual-Nature conflicts are resolved only in theory. A serious problem therefore remains:

And there will always remain, whatever state of 'abundance' society may enjoy, the question of distributive justice, and of the definition of the shareable and of how it is to be shared out, since there will always remain the question of how to delimit the individual sphere, of right and of the rights of the individual with regard to his own life and the means accorded him to live it, and of the positing of the rules concerning the

\textsuperscript{96. Cornelius Castoriadis, Crossroads in the Labyrinth, p.290.}

Castoriadis' excellent analysis is rooted in the rich tradition he comes from. Though I belong to no such tradition, my personal involvement in environmental issues and the environmental movement is the basis for these thoughts.
attribution to each individual of his own body and of a sphere of autonomous activity. An immense distance separates the idea of society in which men will no longer kill each other for the sake of a few pounds, and the idea of a society in which the needs and desires of everyone will be spontaneously in harmony; it is the distance separating a political and historical project from an incoherent fiction.97

Given the above elaboration of an argument, can Sl sustain its intent? Can all conflicts be resolved? I believe the Good Unity is not above conflicts.

Let me take up another issue related to the above. The Good Unity, it can be argued, is one in which

(i) there is no conflict of interest between persons; and

(ii) there is no conflict between the individual and the community.98

In the argument above regarding 'labour as common property resource', we have mentioned about 'needs' and put them as a determining moment of the first historical act. They are important to the development of a human society. Marx's contention is that 'needs' can be organized harmoniously. Can they be so organized? Who will decide about needs?

97. Ibid., p.319.

98. Here I shall overlook the possible conflict between human beings and nature.
Society will respond to individual needs - to each according to his needs - but the needs, however, will be the individual's and individuals will decide on them.99

Let us think about human needs broadly as self-oriented interest.100 Even if we define it this way and look at the first point given above (i) positively, we will find a conflict-free situation hard to maintain.

A socialist theory of rights, then, should envisage a transformed self, wherein self-interest embraces concern for others and commonality is constitutive of the individual. But this alternative conception of self-interest does not eliminate the basis for differences or disputes, since one person's interests in others' and his own happiness may still conflict with another's.101

The 'concern for others' as 'self-oriented interest' is inherently contradictory and inhabits conflict situations as a real possibility. The identity between 'self-interest' and 'concern' is the un-mediated identity between Self and

99. It is important to reconsider the notion of the making of a social individual in and through the relations of production. I have taken a critical view of this 'sociological determinism' in the next chapter.

100. This can be used interchangeably with 'self-interest' but not 'selfishness'. 'Self-oriented interest' is based on collective principles that respect individual interests. Selfishness is in a sense a concept belonging to an anarchic understanding of society.

Other. The un-mediated identity between Self and Other (the Other also as collectivity) is an undifferentiated mass very unlike Marx's communist society.

Marx, though he allows the arguments for first-order mediation, is, however, unsettled about it. His conception therefore fluctuates between 'absence' and 'presence' of the first-order mediation. Given the situation, he proposes the resolution of all conflicts 'between man and man' and 'between individual and species'. Such a conception seems to create an impression of the disappearance of the first-order mediation. And if this disappears in theory then there is nothing to stop the internal collapse of the Other in the Self. There will be the total interiorization of the Other (as collectivity). An emancipatory project would then by inconceivable. Extreme forms of tyranny will get legitimation from this conception.

In addition to this serious problem, we are also faced with other problems which are comparably serious. I shall concretize this statement by considering the problem of obligation, which follows from the above argument. For the resolution of conflict between the individual and the

102. I shall adopt the arguments presented by Christine Sypnowich. I would also like to present here some of her criticism of the neglect of legality in socialist
community (or the species), there is a need to have an understanding of the manner of the linkage. One important consideration in thinking about the linkage is obligation i.e., the self's obligation to the community. The conception of communism which we are trying to understand (and be critical about) cannot be conceived without a species of obligation - intrinsic obligation. Intrinsic obligation 'makes criticism and moral assessment... difficult, controversy and open political discussion constrained'. This places another important consideration i.e. dialogical, deliberative democracy, if this is one way societies. She writes, 'The orthodox Marxist's rejection of the possibility of socialist law rests on two assumptions: first, that there would be material abundance under socialism, so legal rules regulating scarce resources would be superfluous; and second, that socialism accordingly would be devoid of interpersonal conflict, so there would be no need for the mediating role performed by legal institutions'. (p.7.)

She continues, 'The withering away [of the state] thesis deems interpersonal disputes a contingent aspect of social life; like illiteracy or 'bad manners', conflict is a result of ignorance or insensitivity. Once fully educated to live by socialist norms of behaviour, man would live in harmony with his fellows, cooperating in collective projects almost instinctively, without external regulation. Hence, according to Marx's appraisal of man's potential perfectibility, upon the complete destruction of capitalism, even those rare incidents of anti-social behaviour...would be instances of deviance qualitatively different from crime, and would require other, non-legal forms of social control.' (pp.7-8.)

103. Ibid., p.153.
of thinking about communist society, into serious difficulty. Intrinsic obligation undermines participatory content in a dialogical, deliberative democracy. This is basically because intrinsic obligation negates conflicts that can be faced in the following situation within a full-bloomed democracy.

(i) The Case of Dissenting Minority

In communism, as elaborated by Marx, the full development of the individual is at the same time the full development of the community. There is the development of social spaces for full self-conscious participation of the individual in collective decision. But the fact that there are avenues for full participation in collective decisions need not imply that full participation means harmonious collective decision. Why should there be harmonious decision? The 'fair play or solidarity argument' for harmonious collective decision actually destroys the self-conscious participative content of democracy.

104. Communism portrays a self-conscious society. Practically, this self-consciousness of a society must be expressed as total participation in the production and reproduction of the society of self-conscious beings.

105. Ibid., p.144.

106. Ibid., p.147.
Thus, 'a radical democratic community which does not claim that its citizens have an intrinsic obligation to obey the law is better able to foster a liberal and lenient attitude to disobedience...’\textsuperscript{107}

(ii) The Role of Extenuating Circumstances\textsuperscript{108}
Though I will take this up in a different context in the section on 'structurelessness' as a conflict-free condition, it can be stated here that a decision taken today need not be maintained tomorrow. For some the decision may have become erroneous, needing corrective or transformative action.

(iii) The Problem of Non-participants\textsuperscript{109}
It may be possible that not all people will participate in all decisions and that not all who participate in making a decision will participate in making a harmonious decision, and that not all those who are participants in decision-making are participating in the decision.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., p.146.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid., p.148.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p.150.
We can now conclude this subsection by casting doubt on the possibility of achieving a conflict-free society in the form of a communist society. To have a society which has extinguished differences seems a difficult position to sustain.

1.2.1.2. **Structurelessness**

How can we understand structurelessness?

(i) **Strong Version**

We can think of this as a social situation that is anarchic in the sense of a 'rule-less' condition, a situation in which no relations take root and persist over time. Everything is governed by self-interest in the context of rulelessness and total flux.

(ii) **Weak version**

A critically self-conscious community that has the power of automatic or instantaneous transformation of structures.

The strong version would make Marx look like an anarchist. And Marx is not one. One of his strongest statements to that effect is the following:
Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.110

Though this is a statement about people in pre-communist societies, Marx's sensitivity to structures is unquestionable. This is also reflected in his early writings on Prussia.111 As such we may reject the strong version of structurelessness. The weaker version seems closer to Marx's understanding. But this version must be kept in mind with the following understanding Marx held:

Religion, family, state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are now particular modes of production, and fall under its general law [of production]. The positive transcendence of private property as the appropriation of human life, is therefore the positive transcendence of all estrangement -- that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e., social, existence.112


112. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p.91.
In addition to the annulment of the various institutions (that are part of structures), Marx also held that the disappearance of the division of labour...

...makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.113

This seemingly anarchic statement must be balanced with the following statement about communism.

Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.114

Communism is not a state of affairs but a real movement. This understanding fits the weaker version of structurelessness. If we allow the notion of structure to be maintained even in a minimal sense, then perhaps the only way to understand Marx's structurelessness is to propose a form of activity by critical, self-conscious human beings that must result in the non-distantiation of thought, action and its 'products'.

114. Ibid., p.57.
Only such a form of activity will resolve the contradiction between 'essence and existence' and between 'objectification and self-affirmation'. What will all these mean at a more mundane level?

To get to the mundane level, we need to keep two conditions in mind:

(i) totally harmonious collective action; and
(ii) non-distantiation of thought, action and 'products of action' (i.e. the objectified social reality).

These conditions will 'allow' a situation in which structures are formed and unformed i.e. as people decide to interact, decide not to interact and decide to interact in a novel way. They are instantaneous creation and dissolution of structures. Reproduction of structures become a mere appendage to transformation. Both conditions mentioned above will allow the creation of a conflict-free situation. Can these conditions be maintained?

Let us look at the conditions. Number (i), as we have seen in Section 1.2.1.1 (i.e. the section on 'A Perfect Unity') above, is something hard to maintain. Collective decisions need not be harmonious. They cannot be presupposed to be harmonious. Number (ii) would take away the time element, the durability of practices. The understanding of
structures as durable is lost. If it is thought of in any other way, durability becomes part of the understanding of structure.

Among many characteristics, let me enumerate the following, for they are important in pursuing the argument against a version of structurelessness that seems to be close to Marx’s notion of communism.

(i) Structures are ‘summaries’, in a sense. They allow doing something without us having to go over again and again on how\textsuperscript{115} to respond to a situation.

(ii) Structures are ‘condensations’ of information that an individual (or collectivity) needs in order not to process such information everytime s/he faces a similar situation requiring response.

(iii) Structures are ‘social’, and ‘symbolic’ materials that can be worked upon to make either specific variation or introduce novelty on how to respond to a situation or to process information differently concerning the situation.

\textsuperscript{115} Structures are, in a sense, responses becoming supra-individual and supra-situational.
Conceiving structures in this way has nothing contradictory with a society of critical, self-conscious individuals. The act of making a summary and condensing information to act in a recurring situation or its variation is actually an efficient and natural way of responding to events in everyday life. This, over time, becomes durable and assumes a specific form of 'independence'. It is this 'independence' that sets the stage for conflict to occur. When individuals allow certain responses to be structured then it is possible that the 'critical, self-consciousness' is part of this structuredness. It is part of this, both in terms of its reproduction and in terms of 'opposition to transformation'.

Summaries and condensation both imply a certain 'inertia'. This inertia is not to be confused with 'staticness'. It is used in the sense of 'self-

116. Martin Jay while discussing Maurice Merleau-Ponty's 'holism', observes that Merleau-Ponty was sensitive to 'the inertia of the infra-structures' (i.e. 'inertial' institutions). Merleau-Ponty, Martin Jay claims, was critical of Marx's belief that the 'inertia' of institutions can be completely overcome in the non-capitalist future. I share Merleau-Ponty's critical observations (in passages cited from Adventures of the Dialectic) of the inertia of institutions (or of structures in general). In fact, this inertia of structured action cannot be adequately addressed in Marx's communist future unless we introduce the idea of non-antagonistic contradiction and reformulate the notion of structure.

Contd/--
regulation'\textsuperscript{117} and 'reproducibility'. Such an idea must be grounded in the community which we have shown cannot be assumed to be always harmonious. Thus 'tension' and 'conflict' are posited by the durability of structures. The conflicts can be envisaged to be not only from dissenting minorities, which can be an instance of the role of extenuating circumstances, but also from inter-generational groups.

Not only is a community that is completely conflict-free a myth, but it is also dangerously close to the obliteration of the first-order mediation. The resolution of one form


Piaget writes that 'a structure is a system of transformations. Inasmuch as it is a system and not a mere collection of elements and their properties, these transformations involve laws: the structure is preserved or enriched by the interplay of its transformation laws, which never yield results external to the system nor employ elements that are external to it. In short, the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas: the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-regulation'. (p.5.)

Stability of structures not only draw the idea of inertness but, according to Piaget also innateness. Thus he criticizes Noam Chomsky for interpreting stability as innateness of structures.
of conflict emerging from the second-order mediation does not resolve all conflicts in society. In conclusion, Marx cannot theoretically sustain these two statements:

A. ...society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

B. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man - the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.

1.2.1.3. A State of Abundance

What does a state of abundance entail (keeping in mind Marx's notion of the accelerated development of productive forces)?

(i) Intensive, aggressive large-scale technology.
(ii) The continuous disregard for future generations.
(iii) A notion of the ever-availability of natural resources.
Let us dwell on these conditions. As I have argued in section 1.2.1.1. regarding abundance, the only point that needs to be made here in the same regard is that such an abundance is achieved through large-scale and intensive technological development. The problem of that kind of abundance, the confusion of what is participable and what is shareable, has been dealt within the section mentioned above. Here I am really interested in thinking about technology and a conflict-free society briefly. I shall develop these ideas further in a later chapter (see chapter four on Power).

Marx had not developed a critique of technology. In fact he was completely fascinated by the development of productive forces within capitalism and this was because of an important reason.

...because only with this universal development of productive forces is a universal intercourse between men established, which on the one side produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the 'propertyless' man (universal competition), making each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally puts world-historical, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones.118

The implicit criticism is 'external' -- the nature of technology can be controlled by destroying the social relations of production, for that would mean a free society capable of controlling technology. Technology was seen internal to the social relations of production and its changing character. Lenin too accepted this implicit criticism -- the external critique of technology -- and accommodated capitalist technology most enthusiastically.

The task that the Soviet government must set the people in all its scope is - learn to work. The Taylor system, the last word of capitalism in this respect, like all capitalist progress, is a combination of the refined brutality of bourgeois exploitation and a number of the greatest scientific achievements in the field of analyzing mechanical motions during work, the elimination of superfluous and awkward motions, the elaboration of correct methods of work, the introduction of the best system of accounting and control, etc. The Soviet Republic must at all costs adopt all that is valuable in the achievements of science and technology in this field. The possibility of building socialism depends exactly upon our success in combining the Soviet power and the Soviet organization of administration with the up-to-date achievements of capitalism. We must organize in Russia the study and teaching of the Taylor system and systematically try it out and adapt it to our ends.119 (underscoring mine.)

As a result of this fascination for the technological expression in capitalist societies, neither Marx nor many after him, including Lenin, questioned the essence of

technology. Technology was a way to abundance. Abundance was the way to equality, which exists no more as equality. And from that 'ground' to the realm of freedom.

The present criticisms of technology come in many forms. Let us take a look at two. The first one, one may call the environmentalist critique of technology. Technology is seen as unduly aggressive and therefore as something that tends to dominate Nature. The relationship between human beings and Nature mediated by technology is a relationship of aggression and domination. This kind of relationship has led to a great many problems:

(i) Pollution (air, water, and land);
(ii) Near depletion of non-renewable resources;
(iii) Using up the future generation's resources and leaving them a world quite unliveable;
(iv) Desertification because of careless agricultural practices (loss of top soil);
(v) Species imperialism - destruction of the living space of other life forms;

120. Criticisms of technology have taken two directions. Though they have distinctive features, the two are interlinked and stem from the same fact i.e. the domineering, aggressive nature of technology. Thus, while the environmentalist (or ecological activists) criticised the nature of relationship between human beings and Nature that is mediated by aggressive technology, the social activist criticised the nature of relationship between human beings mediated by the same technology.
(vi) Toxic contamination of food;
(vii) Acid rain - damage to forest and lakes;
(viii) Deforestation - destruction of rare fauna and flora;
and
(ix) Destruction of biotic diversity.

Though the above list is not exhaustive, it is sufficient to make the point that Nature's life-support systems are threatened by aggressive technological activity. This has been so both in capitalist and socialist societies.\textsuperscript{121} At what cost can technology be allowed to create abundance? And will this abundance take us towards a conflict-free society? First, the very relationship with Nature is not one of 'negotiation' but one of aggression and domination. The conflict between human beings and Nature has hardly been resolved. And, it seems, given the 'hidden language' of domination within technological practices, technology is hardly going to deliver us from such a domineering relationship.

\textsuperscript{121} The deconstitition of class is supposed to harmonize the relationship between human beings and Nature. This has, however, not taken place. For an exposition of the situation in the erstwhile Soviet Union, see Joan Debardeleben, 'Optimists and Pessimists: The Ecology Debate in the USSR', \textit{Canadian Slavonic Papers}, vol.26(2,3), 1984, pp.127-140.

In addition, the technological drive towards abundance is actually depleting the resources that should be shared with the generations that have not come yet. This tendency may create a greater pressure on future generations to sustain and develop the aggressive relationship with nature. Unless this is mediated by a growing consciousness about the environment and the movements that sustain this concern, the technological drive seems to be quite autonomous. Such interventions are, of course, a basis for conflicts. As long as societies do not reconsider the 'language of domination' within technological practices the conflict between human beings and Nature and indirectly between human beings cannot be resolved.122

122. What I mean here is perhaps best understood with the example of 'orientalism'. 'Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident". Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on. *This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx.*' (pp.2-3.)

Thus, irrespective of the fact that Marxism stood for progressive ideas in the 19th century, it was, as it were, 'contaminated' with ideas of a static Orient. Marx believed that the dialectic of development had to
A critique of technology has also been attempted from a social plane. Thus, for instance, Marcuse writes:

Technology serves to institute new, more effective, and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion... In the face of the totalitarian features of this society, the traditional notion of the 'neutrality' of technology can no longer be maintained. Technology as such cannot be isolated from the use to which it is put; the technological society is a system of domination which operates already in the concept and construction of techniques... As a technological universe, advanced industrial society is a political universe, the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical project -- namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination. As the project unfolds, it shapes the entire universe of discourse and action, intellectual and material culture. In the medium be inserted into the static Orient by the dynamic Occident. In addition, Marx's 'racist' language in describing 'underdeveloped' nations and their people influenced by Orientalism.

In a similar way, we can think about 'technologism' in which a non-negotiatory and aggressive language of domination is preserved in technology. As long as societies, whether capitalist or socialist, work with the unstated, covert principles of 'technologism', domination will remain the central tendency that will dictate the relationships between human beings and Nature and between human beings. Such domination transform Nature and human beings into manipulable objects.

of technology, culture, politics, and the economy merge into an omnipresent system which swallows up or repulses all alternatives. The productivity and growth potential of this system stabilize the society and contain technical progress within the framework of domination.123

Marcuse’s One Dimensional Man is a detailed analysis of a social universe of technological rationality, a universe of ‘one dimension’ i.e. a society in which transcendental and emancipatory conceptions are thoroughly destroyed by an analytical process. Historicity is annulled. For Marcuse, the ‘one dimensional Man’ is the child of this homogenized technological terror, this synthetic womb. ‘By virtue of the way it has organized its technological base, contemporary industrial society tends to be totalitarian. For "totalitarian" is not only a terroristic political coordination of society, but also a non-terroristic economic-technical coordination which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests. It thus precludes the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole. Not only a specific form of government or party rule makes for totalitarianism, but also a specific system of production and distribution which may well be compatible

123. Herbert Marcuse, One-Dimensional Man, pp.xv-xvi.

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with a "pluralism" of parties, newspapers, "countervailing power", etc. 124

This one dimensionality is a real possibility of even socialist societies. The fact that this is so is because there is something about technology that we have not taken into consideration. There is an essence 125 of technology. And the essence of technology is related to it being a mode of universalization that turns, through a non-self analytic capacity, the whole world - social and natural - into a "standing-reserve" in the service of one imperialist 'form of life'.

124. Ibid., p.3.

Noam Chomsky's term 'totalitarian free enterprise' captures this situation adequately. To the 'repressive technology' which is a feature of 'totalitarian free enterprise', we need to merely add those features of technology that Herbert Marcuse has elaborated in his One Dimensional Man.


My conception of technology is to an extent influenced by Heidegger.
Technology's mode of universalization emerges from labour's universal expression and movement. In order to survive, human beings have to interact with Nature and produce their lives. This is a universal necessity and constitutes one movement of labour. Labour also moves in another form and this constitutes labour's 'existential determinants'. For labour exists within a specific environment, with specific endowments, interacts with the environment in specific ways, and is molded by the environment in specific ways. These existential determinants spread over the world many 'wholes', many forms of life. Technology's impersonal aim is the continuous destruction of these forms of life for the universal form of life, which is a universe of technological rationality, a universe in which the interiorization of the Self in the Other is an easy 'technological surgery'. This amounts to a 'bad unity'.

126. A Wittgensteinian term. Used here in one of the possible interpretations i.e. the Cultural-Historical view. This 'is a way of life, or a mode, manner, fashion, or style of life: ... it has something important to do with the class structure, the values, the religion, the type of industry and commerce and of recreation that characterize a group of people'.


These ideas will be addressed to some extent in chapters three and four.
In conclusion, I would like to make the following observation. In the above section on 'Can All Conflicts be Resolved?', the aim was at one level to show the impossibility of overcoming conflicts of all sorts (something which is reflected in Mao's writings). Though this is an important concern, however the real and more important aim was to demonstrate that if we remove or doubt the resolvability of all conflicts, a great deal of theoretical space opens up for elaboration and reconstruction. With this in mind, let us move on to the second criticism.

1.2.2. Relations of Production as Total Social Space

Relations of production is a historically specific relationship between classes in the process of production. These relations can be understood in two important senses, both of which contribute to an understanding of them as the total social space.

In the first sense, relations of production are internal relations. Internal relation is an important aspect of dialectical conception. What is this internal relation? 'A relation $R_{AB}$ may be defined as internal if an only A would not be what it essentially is unless B is related to it in
the way that it is.' To make it more concrete, let me quote Marx:

Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand. And if someone were to say: Seen from the perspective of society, there are no slaves and no citizens: both are human beings. Rather, they are that outside society. To be a slave, to be a citizen, are social characteristics, relations between human beings A and B. Human being A, as such, is not a slave. He is a slave in and through society.

The other sense is the sense of a dialectical totality. Class relations are a totality. They determine the specific kind of production. Everything else that materializes in the social space is posited by the relations. It is internal to them. Marx describes the emergence of such a totality historically.

This organic system itself [Marx means the bourgeois system], as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality.


129. See Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p.20. (Preface)

130. Karl Marx, Grundrisse p.278.
Though this is a historical development, in the dialectical conception of society, which is the way Marx conceived of society, ontologically the 'whole' assumes priority.

The whole, with its principle of structure is, therefore, prior to the parts. It is the universal or pervasive influence of this structural principle that makes the distinguishable and diverse elements what they are, that determines their relations to one another, and adjusts each one of them reciprocally to every other. It is the universal principle of which the differentiations are manifestations or exemplifications. Seen from a slightly different angle, this universal appears as the continuous matrix within which, and out of which, the terms in relation that constitute the system are differentiated.131 (underscoring mine.)

The relations of production is the organizing principle of class societies. The various social elements in society are instantiations of this relation and enact the dynamics of the relations.

It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it.132


What I have tried to show above is that in Marxist theory the relations of production and the totality that grows out of it are analytically the pre-given totality into which humans are born. Every being is also objectively assigned a class position in the totality. The relations of production is therefore the determining 'content' of the social space in which we find ourselves.

This conception of the relations of production as total social space has serious implications with regard to our understanding of society. But before we look at the implications, let us consider an important point briefly. The reason behind assigning class the primary status has to do with Marx's emancipatory project. In creating an analytical two-class conception of society, Marx also made possible the internal movement of societies through the struggles between the classes. Historically, one group, the exploited and brutalized, i.e. the proletariat, would increase in number. The general ills of society become concentrated in this section. It emerges as a universal class. The proletariat includes the vast majority of humanity. The liberation of this group is not merely the liberation of one class but the liberation of all humanity from the conditions that alienate and brutalize human beings, both the exploited and the exploiter. The basis of
class division -- private property -- is destroyed in the revolutionary activity of the proletariat and humanity moves towards a classless society amidst abundance. Inspite of this emancipatory project inherent in Marx's theoretical and historical analysis, the conception of relations of production as total social space presents a number of critical problems.133

(i) In Marxism, a historical consideration of social development subordinates the role of collectivities other than class. They are absent in Karl Marx's theory of history and society. Marxism is therefore theoretically 'blind' to the other collectivities in society.

One must keep in mind that there is a structural continuity from non-class society to class society. Historically this continuity is underplayed. Making a critical comment on Marxism, Amilcar Cabral writes:

...does History begin only from the moment of the launching of the phenomenon of class and,

133. I am questioning the primacy of class not in the sense of rejecting it or underplaying its role and influences but in the sense of redefining its 'sphere of influence'.
consequently, of class struggle? To reply in the affirmative would be to place outside history the whole period of life of human groups from the discovery of hunting, and later of nomadic and sedentary agriculture, to cattle raising and to the private appropriation of land. 134

This historical marginalization of non-class aspects is part of the internal arrangement of Marxism. And this is also maintained in the understanding of contemporary society. The non-class aspects have no specified autonomy.

(ii) Relations of production as total social space analytically fill the whole of social space with two categories of people categorized objectively and related structurally and antagonistically. It is part of historical development that a huge majority of humanity are exploited and alienated. In their self-conscious intervention to dialectically resolve this exploitation and alienation, they become the 'world-historical, empirically universal individuals' 134.


Cabral is employing a notion of class that is restricted to the capitalist society. In spite of this, the general drift of his concern is the exclusion of non-class aspects.
Historically, they become the 'Universal Class' first. 'Class' and 'Universal Class' have the following implication:

In Marxism, there are possible only two types of individuals and/or individual identities. One is a limited, 'local' class identity; the other is a 'universal' identity -- 'the empirically universal individuals'. Other identities are not possible in Marxist theory. All other identities, which are not objectively given, would in Marxist theory be a result of 'false consciousness', a consciousness which by the very nature of its social existence understands itself 'falsely'. This disjunction is sought to be overcome by a theory that prepares the consciousness for undoing the disjunction by promoting active political mobilization in order to establish the material conditions for such a disjunction to be materially deconstituted. This disjunction would disappear if we 'recognize' class identity as primary identity and the rest as essentially springing from false recognition and

135. For those who resisted this kind of analysis, the 'autonomy' of other identities was cautiously acknowledged but their 'agency' in historical processes was kept marginal.
understanding or at best a 'marginal' product of class identity.

Given the various movements that make up an important part of contemporary reality, can such an argument as above be maintained without sacrificing emerging realities? Take for instance the integrity of a nation-state. Today, the social movement that threatens this integrity is not a class movement per se, but a movement that is acutely conscious of its ethnicity.\(^{136}\) The ethno-nationalist movements are a growing reality. The basis of such an important contemporary historical development cannot be carelessly assigned to class, though a neglect of the role of class in such a historical development artificially simplifies a complex reality. Ethnicity is the basis and 'ethno-identity' plays as important a role as class identity in such movements.

(iii) In Marxist theory, because of the theory of class, and more particularly because of the theory of the

proletarian as the universal class, the 'identities' that can be assigned to an individual are only of two types. One is the class identity, for all societies are class societies; and the other is the identity of the 'empirically universal individual' in a classless society. Any other identity is really illusory or a 'negligible problem'. Such a notion is based on 'pure' notions of 'capital' and 'labour'. These dialectically related categories are sexless, raceless and nationless. Is this conception of capital and labour really possible? Can capital and labour be brutally separated from their 'existential determinants'? I believe that they cannot be. Capital and labour are segmented at various levels by factors lying 'outside' the relation of production, provided we keep in mind the order of mediation. Both capital and labour are segmented along sexual and cultural/ethno-communal lines.137 We therefore have, for instance, for labour, a 'generic division of labour' which in its


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specificity can be decomposed into a sexual and a cultural division of labour. To consider capital and labour as totally devoid of any contingent determinations i.e. to consider them only in universal abstractions create a problem in understanding and explaining the real world.

In conclusion -- to a point that was raised earlier -- the complete concern for the universal form of life has completely submerged the immensely complex material womb from which labour intends. I will take the problem of relations of production more extensively in the next chapter.

1.3. Conclusion

I have presented above a particular reading of Marx's theory. I have presented certain aspects and emphasized a few others in order to be able to develop them in the

Articles by activists strongly reflect the ethnicization of capital and labour. See for instance 'The Tamil National Question -- A Challenge to the Communist Revolutionaries' in National Question in India (Hyderabad : Andhra Pradesh Radical Students Union, 1982), pp. 204-205.

direction of non-workerist Historical Materialism. But my basic reason was to show that inbuilt in Marxism is the need to capture and to promote those processes that would eventually contribute to the creation of a more humane universal society. In such a society, human beings will be 'world-historical, empirically universal beings'. The theoretical imagination behind a universal institutional matrix that will 'productively discipline' us into universal beings is something I wanted to capture and preserve.

Over the years, Marxism has been exposed to and put under a great deal of stress not only by other theories but also, more importantly, by experiences of concrete societies, capitalist and socialist. How can Historical Materialism respond to this stress? I am not really interested in pursuing an examination of the kind of responses we already have and to build upon this critique. Instead I want to take a fresh look and offer a possible trajectory of Historical Materialism that I have named as non-workerist model of Historical Materialism. To do this, first I had to create the necessary theoretical space. This I had done by taking Marx's notion of the communist future. A fairly clear idea of the communist future is absolutely essential to assign a meaning and purpose for 'Today'. To forgo the notion of a communist future is to forgo the Utopian imagination (not fantasy) and be trapped in the world of 'Today' and in a
world 'without alternatives'.\textsuperscript{139} It is for this reason that I have addressed the imagination of the communist future in Marx at some length.

To conclude, I have contested the way Marx had constructed the notion of a communist future and I have in some detail shown the impossibility of overcoming strife. Along with this, I have also attempted to show that it is difficult to sustain the claim that relations of production constitute the total social space. These general criticisms have far reaching implications. They, in effect, set the stage for the sociological elaboration and reconstruction of Historical Materialism in the subsequent chapters.

\textsuperscript{139} For an excellent recent massive study on Utopia, see Krishan Kumar, \textit{Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times} (Oxford : Basil Blackwell, 1987).

Kumar cites Karl Mannheim at the end of the book and the quote in particularly relevant to the argument presented in the text above.

'The complete disappearance of the utopian element from human thought and action would mean that human nature and human development would take on a totally new character. The disappearance of utopia brings about a static state of affairs in which man himself becomes no more than a thing. We would then be faced with the greatest paradox imaginable, namely, that man, who has achieved the highest degree of rational mastery of existence, left without any ideals, becomes a mere creature of impulses. Thus, after a long tortuous, but heroic development, just at the highest stage of awareness, when history is ceasing to be blind fate, and is becoming more and more man's own creation, with the relinquishment of utopias, man would lose his will to shape history and therewith his ability to understand it.' [Cited from Karl Mannheim, \textit{Ideology and Utopia} (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960)].