CHAPTER II: MARX

1. Hegel to Marx

The Young Hegelians mark the passage from Hegel's critical philosophy of self-consciousness to Karl Marx's revolutionary philosophy of social activity. They converted the dialectical method of thinking to a method of criticism comparing the existent with the possible. They also saw in it a method of action since it fulfills itself by developing one alternative rather than another, as Arnold Ruge wrote, "The true content of the Hegelian Geistesphilosophie is humanism, its true method is criticism." The Young Hegelians interpreted the abstract absolute spirit of Hegel as the abstract historical activity of man. They regarded the Phanomenologie des Geistes, with its description of the progressive development of different phases of individual and social consciousness, as Hegel's most important work, and boldly identified his metaphysical concept of freedom with political, religious, legal, and intellectual freedom as occasion demanded.¹

The Young Hegelians made religious criticism the starting point of all criticism. Criticism of the gospel and the church led them to the study of social milieu and thus they were drawn to the criticism of the state and of property, of the whole social and political order. Thus "philosophy is related to the whole, vital movement of life."²

From their study of religion the Young Hegelians discovered the essential dichotomy or dualism which splits the society and causes bondage in various forms. Max Stirner posed this dualism as between individual and society, i.e., the state in its concrete form. Feuerbach found himself first in religion where man alienates himself from existence, separates the abstract from real and makes the distinction between sacred and profane, between god and man.

2. Arnold Ruge: Year Book from Halle 1840, pp. 1931-32
This has its counterpart in the dualism of state which separates the political function of the community from the social and economic and pretends to give all citizens equality before law while subjecting them to social and economic disabilities. The dualism which Feuerbach found between man and state was revised by Marx into a dualism between man-in-class and the state.

Thus the Young Hegelians, particularly Feuerbach passed on three cardinal elements in the Marxian system: (1) to reconstruct philosophy as a method of approaching the practical problems of man (2) to regard man not in his abstract rationality but in his empirical social context as the carrier of history, (3) to explain traditional conceptions of religion and state as fetishistic expressions of unconscious activities in human society at different times.

Marx incorporated these ideas in his philosophy after further correction and improvement. He saw the limits of religious criticism and placed social emancipation before atheism. He carried the dialectical struggle from the realm of ideas to the level of systems of economic production and classed. He discovered that man is a complex of social relationships, that man who is Feuerbach's measure of truth is not abstract man but man in class. And the state, Marx found, was rooted in a soil other than the unfolding logical idea. Its voice was the voice of reason but its hand was the hand of the privileged interest.

2. Dialectical Materialism

The philosophy of Marx is known as dialectical materialism. The method it undertakes to study the phenomena of nature and society is dialectical; and the truth it discovers in all change or progress is the force of matter and material production. With Hegel, Marx thinks that evolution proceeds dialectically. Dialectics, says Lenin, is the study of the contradiction within the very essence of things. Evolution is not a mere harmonious and easy unfoldment of phenomena but a disclosure of the contradiction.
inherent in things and phenomena. Thus dialectics holds that internal contradictions are inherent in all things of nature because everything has a positive and a negative side, a past and a future, something dying away and something developing. Thus by virtue of these opposing tendencies conflict arises between these opposites, between the old and the new, between that which is decaying and that which is developing. This continuous struggle goes not only in the realm of nature but in the realm of mind also, and this constitutes the content of all development. Thus, like Hegel, Marx also thinks that every tendency, by its very success, generates its antithesis so that at the moment of its apparent success its opposite begins to gain upon it. This conflict between the thesis and the antithesis resolves into a higher synthesis. Marx illustrates this process of evolution with the following example: the 19th century saw the triumph of individualism but during its triumph it itself was generating collectivism as its antithesis; this opposition led to a synthesis whereby collectivism became truer and richer in content by including individualism within itself. Thus the conflict of opposite tendencies in thought and in events leads towards greater truth and reality. Hence, dialectics is "the science of the general laws of motion — both of the external world and of human thought."  

Though Marx accepts the dialectical method of Hegel he does not accept his idealistic interpretation that evolution of the world is the unfoldment of an absolute idea. He says, "To Hegel the process of thinking which under the name of the 'Idea' he even transformed into an independent subject is demiurge of the real world and the real world is only the external phenomenal form of the Idea. With me the idea is nothing else than the material reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought." 2 Man is the product of

2. Karl Marx : Preface to the Capital, 2nd Ed.
nature in the process of its development and idea is the product of human brain. Thus Marx and Engels stand for the primacy of nature over spirit and take only the 'rational kernel' of Hegel's philosophy, i.e., the dialectics, casting aside its 'idealistic shell'.

Marx not only rejects Hegelian idealism but also the philosophies of Hume and Kant, agnosticism and positivism in their various forms. He regards such philosophies as reactionary concession to idealism and at best "a shamefaced way of surreptitiously accepting materialism while donning it before the world". Marx is equally opposed to the older school of materialism as to that of Feuerbach which he calls mechanistic. He points out, "The chief defect of all previous materialism -- including that of Feuerbach -- is that the object, the reality, sensibility is only apprehended under the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensible activity or practice, not subjectively. Hence it came about, that the active side was developed by idealism in opposition to materialism". The old materialists thought that matter is the cause of sensations and impressions and mind is nothing but a tabula rasa passively receiving sensations having no active functions of its own. To Marx, all knowledge is active. Like other speculative thinkers Marx is not interested in making a distinction between reality and appearance. The test of knowledge or reality is successful working. That only is real upon which we can successfully work. Matter or the material environment is continually changing. It always acts upon our mind thereby changing it. Mind also in its turn reacts upon matter. Thus a continually changing agent knows a continually shifting, changing and evanescent environment and by virtue of his knowledge gives the impetus to further change. In this way, progress goes on.

1. F. Engels : Ludwig Feuerbach; Selected works, Vol.I. p.368
2. Karl Marx : Theses on Feuerbach.
Thus the old materialists failing to take into account the active side of life mind did not understand the importance of 'revolutionary practical activity'.

Thus Marx converts older materialists', — including Feuerbach's — passive contemplative philosophy into an active one. Anyway, his materialism is less concerned with the dependence of spirit upon nature than with the impossibility of disinterested knowledge and thought. Engels, following Marx, gives the materialistic theory of mind when he says, "it is impossible to separate matter from matter that thinks."¹ Mind, says Engels, is the specific quality of the specifically organized matter, i.e., brain. Bukharin writes, "Mind is a special property of matter organized in a special manner."² So also Lenin,— "The scientific doctrine of the structure of substance, the chemical composition of food and the elements may be antiquated with time; but the truth that man is unable to subsist on thought and beget children by Platonic love alone can never become antiquated."³

Thus, to Marx, mind, though it depends upon matter, is active. Then, is mind free? Are human actions undetermined? Historical materialism answers these questions in the negative. Because, though mind is active it is dependent on the conditions of material life of society. What is the condition that determines the character of mental activity? Here, historical materialism holds that the determining force is the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence, the mode of production of material values, viz., food, clothing, etc., which are indispensable for the life and development of society. Thus, mind is active only within the framework of production and distribution of wealth.

Hence Marx concludes, "The mode of production in material

2. N. Bukharin: Historical Materialism, New York, 1923, p. 55
3. Lenin: Materialism and Empirio-Criticism; Martin Lawrence, London, 1927, p. 152
life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual process of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but on the contrary their social being determines their consciousness."

To sum up: - The basis of every social order is the system of production and exchange. This determines in every society the method of distribution of the products and the consequent division of society into classes. The ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought not in the minds of thinkers but in changes in the system of production and exchange, i.e., not in contemporary philosophy but in contemporary economics. Socialism is nothing but the reflex in thought of the change in mode of production.

3. Historical Materialism

Having realized the incompleteness of old materialism Marx wanted to bring "the science of society .......... into harmony with materialist foundation" and applied the principles of dialectical materialism to the study social history. The dialectical theory asserts that development of any kind results from the conflict of opposites and that which emerges from this conflict is nearer to perfection and richer in content than the conflicting tendencies as it includes and transcends both the opposing tendencies whose conflict has produced it. \[1\] Materialism, on the other hand, leads Marx to insist that the driving forces behind the process of dialectical development is in the last analysis not mental but material, i.e., the physical events of living.

Further, contrary to old materialism, his new materialism holds that nature is not an accidental agglomeration of things, of phenomena, unconnected with and isolated from and independent of each other but is a connected, integral whole in which things and events are organically related with one another and their interdependence is the law of the development of nature, thereby suggesting that the

1. Karl Marx: Preface to the Critique of Political Economy.
connection and interdependence of the phenomena of social life are the laws of the development of society itself.

Hence, the history of society ceases to be a hâgglede-piggledy agglomeration of accidents and becomes the history of development according to regular laws and the study of society becomes a study of science.

If nature, i.e., the material world, Marx continues, is primary and mind or thought in secondary and derivative, if the material world exists outside and independently of any mind and if mind is nothing but a reflection of this material world, then it follows that the material life of society is also an objective extra-mental reality and that the spiritual and intellectual life of society is simply a derivation of the former. Hence, the origin of social ideas, political theories and institutions is not to be sought for in men's brain nor in men's better insight into eternal truth and justice but in the conditions of material life itself of which these special ideas and theories are mere reflection.

What are the conditions of the material life of society? Undoubtedly these include geographical environment and growth of population which are indispensable conditions of material life of society. But these are not, in the last resort, the chief force of development of society, the force which determines the character of the social system. What then is the chief force that determines the social system and the development of society from one system to another?

Historical materialism answers that this force is the method of procuring the means of life necessary for human existence, the mode of production of material values such as food, clothing, etc., which are essential for the life and development of society. The motive force of social development is not to be found in the philosophies but in the economics of the epoch concerned. Marx says, "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will;
these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of
development of their material forces of production. The sum total
of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure
of society -- the real foundation on which rises a legal and political
superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social con-
sciousness. The mode of production of material life determines the
social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not
the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the
contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. At a
certain stage of their development the material productive forces in
society come into conflict with the existing relations of production,
or, what in but a legal expression of the same thing, with the property
relations within which they have been at work before. From forms of
development of the productive forces these relations turn into their
setters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of
the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or
less rapidly transformed."

In plain words, this means that at any given period society is
divided into two hostile classes on the basis of conflicting economic
interests. The nature of the classes depends upon the system of produc-
tion prevailing at that time. Tools and raw materials are necessary
for producing commodities. Some enjoy a privileged position by virtue
of their possession of the raw materials and means of production and
others get only a nominal part of the returns as they transform the
raw materials into usable commodities. Hence a conflict arises between
the owner and the actual producer. Now, in conformity with the develop-
ment of the productive forces of society, men's relation of production,
i.e., their economic relations also become changed.

Four main types of relations of production are known to history,
viz., primitive communal, slave, feudal, capitalist and these are to
be followed by a fifth, viz., socialist.

1. Karl Marx: Preface to the Critique of Political Economy
1. Primitive communal system: In a primitive communal system, means of production are socially owned. In order to collect fruits from forests, to hunt wild animals, to catch fish, and to build shelters, men have to work together and preserve themselves against death and starvation. Joint labour ensures common ownership of the means of production. Private ownership of the means of production is unknown in primitive communal society. Accordingly, there is no exploitation of one class by another.

2. Slave system: The primitive tribal commune broke down with the beginning of private property in land and cattle. The slave-owning society came into being. The slave-owner owns the means of production and also the worker in production, i.e., the slave whom he can sell and purchase and even kill if he likes. Not to speak of enjoying the fruits of his labour the slave has no right even to his own person. Common ownership has been replaced by private ownership. Division between the rich and the poor, the exploiter and the exploited, the owner with full rights and the slaves having no rights, and a fierce struggle between the two, — such is the picture of the slave-owning society.

3. Feudal system: The basis of the relations of production under the feudal system is that the lord owns the means of production and also the workers, but he does not own their person. Side by side with feudal ownership exists also the ownership of the peasants. The new productive forces demand that the workers must display some skill in production and take some initiative and interest. The feudal lord, therefore, discards the slaves and works the serfs who have implements and interest for work. Private ownership is further developed but exploitation remains almost the same. A class struggle between the lord on the one hand, and the villeins and serfs on the other, is the principal feature of the feudal society.

4. Capitalist system: The basis of the relations of production under the capitalist system is that the owner, i.e., the capitalist owns the means of production but not the workers in production in any way. They are personally free but as they are deprived of the means of
production, they, in order to live, are compelled to sell their labour power to the capitalist. Alongside of capitalist property exists private property of the peasants and workers also which is based on personal labour. In place of the handicraft workshops that appear large capitalist factories which are run on scientific lines being equipped with power and machinery.

But having developed productive forces to a tremendous extent, capitalism is faced with contradictions which it cannot dispense with. On the one hand, by expanding production and concentrating millions of workers in huge mills and factories, capitalism itself gives the process of production a social character and thus undermines its own foundation, in as much as the social character of the process of production demands social ownership of the means of production. Yet the means of production remain the private property of the capitalist, thereby failing to solve the contradiction inherent in it. Moreover, by producing larger and larger quantities of commodities and reducing their prices, capitalism intensifies competition, ruins the mass of small private owners and converts them into the proletariat. Thus, the capitalist economy falls into periodical crises of overproduction. Then the capitalists, finding no effective demand for their goods owing to the ruination of small classes which has been caused by the capitalists themselves, are compelled to destroy products and suspend production. Millions of people suffer unemployment and starvation, not because there is want of goods but because there is overproduction of them. Production begins to stagnate. A new system becomes necessary to carry it forward, a synthesis between the conflicting mode of production and relation of production.

This means that capitalism is pregnant with revolution which shall replace it with the socialist system. The secret of revolution is in the fact that within the capitalist system there is an uncompromising struggle between the owner and the worker.

5. Socialist system: The basis of the relations of production under the socialist system is the social ownership of the means of production—
There are no longer exploiters and the exploited. The goods produced are distributed equitably under the guiding motto "from each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs". Socialist production knows no periodical crises of overproduction and consequent disorders which result from the exploitation of one class by the other, because here in socialist system the process of production is accompanied by the social ownership of the means of production.

Such, in short, is the picture of men’s relations of production in the course of the history of society.

From the above analysis Marx comes to the conclusion that the history of all hitherto existing society except the history of the primitive community is the history of class struggle. Due to the conflict of these opposing forces and interests progress is arrested for some time till a new system appears, overcomes the opposition and makes fresh progress possible. But this new system again establishes new classes and new conditions of opposition thereby again disturbing the course of progress. "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 reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.---The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonism, it has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones." 1

Marx and Engels are of opinion that the economically dominant section not only control the state power but also the political ideas, ideologies, law, education, ethics, religion, literature and art, i.e., the whole cultural superstructure prevailing in society. The legal and moral systems reflect the fundamental economic structure being conditioned by the need of the exploiting class to protect and justify the peculiar form of exploitation set up by them.

This, in short, is the materialist conception of history given by Marx and Engels. Earlier historical theories at best examined the ideological motives of the activity of men without further investigating what produced these motives. Historical materialism tries to provide an explanation of ideological motives and underlying forces of historical development. On the strength of this explanation Marx claimed to have discovered these laws of social change and to have converted history and sociology into branches of science.

4. Theory of State

Just as the final causes of all changes are to be sought not in man's brain but in changes in modes of production and exchange so also the political structure and growth of society are to be found not in the philosophy but in the economics of the epoch concerned. The economically dominant class, in order to keep their predominance, try to hold political supremacy, thereby capturing the machinery of the state. So, the state originates in property. In order not to die of hunger the labourer or the producer disposes of his labour power to the owner and in return gets only his subsistence. The balance, or the surplus value of labour, as Marx calls it, goes to the owner. This is exploitation. A conflict follows between the exploiter and the exploited. Hence, in order that this antagonism might not consume the owner of the means of production, a power becomes necessary on the part of him to keep the producers within the bounds of order. This power is the state controlled and guided by the economically dominant persons. Marx thinks that the state is by no means a power imposed on society from outside. Rather, "it is the product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is 'cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel.'" Hence, Marx believes, in the first place, in the organic nature of state and secondly in its origin in property and class struggle.

After the state has originated in property what is the motive
that leads it to transition from one stage to another? Historical
materialism answers that at a certain stage, due to the conflict
of the two classes progress of production becomes arrested under the
aegis of the exploiting class. Hence, the total change of the present
order, - economic and political, becomes necessary and as a result
a new state comes into existence. For example, in the feudal state
labour power is concentrated mainly on land. The feudal lords own
the means of production and although they enjoy the cream of produc­
tion they do not take any active interest in land. The tillers, on
the other hand, who know that they are not the owners nor will they
enjoy the fruits of production become disinterested at the head of
the exploited class, emerge the section of merchants and traders whose
interests are bound up with a new economic order but who suffer under
feudal exploitation equally with the class of tillers. Thus, conflict
arises between the privileged class and the sufferers and production
is hampered. A revolution becomes necessary for the total change of
the feudal state. The capitalist state comes in as a result of this
revolution where power is enjoyed by merchants and traders now grown
into the industrial bourgeoisie. The whole policy of the state is
directed towards the furtherance of capitalist enterprise. But here
again, by producing larger and larger quantities of commodities,
the capitalist intensifies competition, ruins the case of small and
middle class owners and converts them into the proletariat. As the
ordinary people begin to lose their buying power the capitalist,
finding no effective demand for his goods, burns and destroys them
throwing thousands of people out of employment. Moreover, while the
process of production is collective and hence demands collective
ownership of the means of production, it remains under private
ownership. This internal contradiction again portends the end of
capitalist society through a revolution and paves the way for the
advent of socialist society.
In all cases of transition from one society to another the leadership is taken not by the poorest and most exploited but by the most promising and powerful factors in production. As the proletariat are the most powerful factors in industrial production they take the leadership in the socialist revolution and rise to political power. The proletarian vanguard, after leading the revolution to success, runs the state under their dictatorship. The authority of the state is used by them to liquidate the remains of bourgeois power till a classless society is reached.

Thus, in every age the economically dominant class through the medium of the state become also politically dominant and acquire new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. The state becomes an instrument of coercion, in order to keep the interest of the ruling class intact and that of the real producers under suppression the state requires a public power. This consists not merely of special bodies of armed men but of other coercive instruments like the police, penal laws, prison, etc. Every revolution, by destroying the special bodies which are nothing but apparatus of state power creates a new form of special bodies and instruments which will serve the interest not of exploiting minorities but of the exploited majorities. Periods occur when the warring classes are so nearly balanced that the state appearing as mediator acquires for the moment a certain independence in relation to both. Engels says, "The state has not existed from all eternity. There have been societies which managed without it, which had no conception of the state and state power. At a certain stage of economic development, which was necessarily bound up with the cleavage of society into classes the state became a necessity owing to this cleavage. We are now rapidly approaching a stage in the development of production at which the existence of these classes has not only ceased to be a necessity but is becoming a positive hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they arose out of an earlier stage. Along with them the state will inevitably fall. The society that organises production on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole
state machine where it will then belong: in the museum of the antiquities side by side with the spinning wheel and bronze axe." 1

To sum up: the state arose because society split up into classes with the origin of property; it arose in order to keep under restraint the exploited majority in the interests of the exploiting minority. It is nothing but an instrument in the hands of the exploiters for the exploitation of the oppressed class. With the development of socialism and inauguration of a classless society the state will wither away. After the proletarian have seized the machinery of the state they transform the means of production into state property. But in doing this they put an end to themselves as a class antagonism, to the state also as the state, i.e., as a means of coercing the majority. Former society using an organization of the exploiting class had need of the state to forcibly hold down the exploited class in conditions of oppression. The state of such society was the visible embodiment, the official representative of the economically dominant class. But when the state comes to be class representative, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection and as soon as the conflict between the exploiter and the exploited has been ended, there is no more necessity of state as a special repressive force. The first act by which the state nationalizes property becomes also its last independent act as state. The interference of state power becomes unnecessary. The governing body of the state is replaced by the voluntary co-operators of society. In this way, state does not abolish itself, it simply withers away.

Some thinkers interpret the conception of the "withering away" of state as the slurring, if not the repudiation of revolution. But such an interpretation is the crudest distortion of Marxism. When Marx and Engels speak of withering away of state they do not mean that capitalist state will wither away, or a single socialist state having a capitalist encirclement will wither away. In order to

overthrow capitalism, it is not only necessary to remove the bourgeoisie from power, it is not only necessary to expropriate the capitalists, but it is also necessary to smash entirely the bourgeois state machine by a revolution — its old army, its bureaucratic officialism and its police force and to substitute for it a new socialist state. The capitalist state will be abolished, whereas the socialist state will wither away. Marx does not underestimate the role and significance of the socialist state and of its military, punitive and intelligence organs because these are essential for the defence of the socialist land from foreign attack. Thus, withering away of state is possible only when socialism is already victorious in all countries, or in the majority of countries so that a socialist encirclement exists instead of a capitalist encirclement, when there is no more danger of foreign attack and when there is no more need to strengthen the army and the state.