To be radical is to go to the root of the matter. For man, however, the root is man himself.

Karl Marx

Chapter - 5

CONCLUSION:
AN EMERGING FRAMEWORK
In the concluding chapter, we argue that an epistemological synthesis of Lukács' and Marcuse's theories would provide an adequate framework for a non-positivist Marxist theory of knowledge. Our attempt of synthesis is made on the basis of the respective theories of rationality of Lukács and Marcuse. We have seen that both Lukács' and Marcuse's theory of rationality is internally linked to the theory of creative subjectivity. So, our attempt is to synthesise the systems of both the philosophers on the basis of their respective theories of rationality and subjectivity.

Lukács' theory of rationality is of the nature of a critique of formal rationality. Formalistic theories, Lukács argues, imply a paradigm of rationality which is restricted to the province of appearances, which, by its nature, is incapable of penetrating the 'given-ness' of the facts into their real essence. That is, formalistic enquiries do not go beyond the given facts, precisely because the fundamental assumption involved in such enquiries is that the reality is that which is given, or, a given fact is real, devoid of any content.

To view commodity as an autonomous fact devoid of any human content, according to Lukács, is to detach the domain of products from the domain of production. That is, to separate the domain of objects from the domain of the historical substratum of human praxis, or, to alienate object from praxis. In the system of 'fetishistic' production, the product assumes a non-human objectivity, appears to be an independent fact. Or, from a subjective point of view, the producer becomes alienated from the product, becomes a passive subject. The picture of reification, according to Lukács, is the picture of the separation of the product from the producer. 'Reified' mode of thinking is the formalist mode of thinking which fundamentally assumes the denial of the concept of object as the product of praxis and, thereby, the concept of the separation of the subject from the object.
Objects assuming supra-historical power become the objects of ‘worship’, that, human consciousness becomes submissive to the domain of objects. Reason ceases to be the power of controlling the world; it turns to be something controlled by the objects. Thought becomes a mode of representation of the given facts. It loses its critical content; it ceases to be an activity of penetrating the immediacy of the facts. Explicitly, Lukács’ critique of reified rationality implies a critique of passive subjectivity. Consequently, Lukács’ alternative paradigm of rationality involves an alternative theory of subjectivity.

Lukács’ alternative paradigm is a dialectical - historicist one. The fundamental principle of it is the principle of the dialectical unity of subject and object. The concept of subject-object unity implies the meaning of the concepts of praxis and historicity. On the one hand, it means that object is not an autonomous fact but the product of praxis, and, on the other, objects are historical forms, not real in themselves. Dialectical enquiry does not stop at the level of the perception of the facts, as the sole aim of it is to go beyond them to the realm of their historical constitution, or, to see them as the manifestations of human essence. Dialectical historicist paradigm replaces formalism with essentialism, empiricism with critical rationalism of Hegelian variety. Consequently it replaces the theory of passive subjectivity with the theory of creative subjectivity.

The question of establishing the unity of subject and object, for Lukács, is a practical question. That is, such a unity gets established only in a society where man is not alienated from his labour or, where the objects are recognised to be the manifestations of human essence. The transition from capitalism to socialism, in Lukács’ Marxism, is a movement towards the unification of subject and object. Revolution is the movement towards the replacement of the concept of subject-object duality with that of their dialectical unity.
Marcuse's theory of rationality is implied in his critique of one-dimensional rationality. One-dimensional rationality, in Marcuse's sense, refers to a mode of approach specific to one-dimensional societies where subject is assimilated into the object. It refers to an extreme variety of formalism, a total objectivism in which object is not a category independent of subject but a category which assimilates the subject into itself and becomes a one-dimensional reality. One-dimensionalism presupposes subject-object identity. It implies the concept of subject as a mechanical element of the objective system. More clearly, the paradigm of One-dimensional rationality implies the concept of mechanical subjectivity. Marcuse's critique of one-dimensional rationality presupposes a critique of the theory of mechanical subjectivity.

Marcuse's alternative to positivism is dialectical philosophy. Dialectical philosophy is 'bi-dimensional', that, the paradigm presupposed in it is the paradigm of bi-dimensional rationality. Bi-dimensional thought understands the dialectical tension between subject and object. Subject, according to its framework, is a 'free' category conceptually prior to the objective domain. By virtue of its independence from the objective world it assumes the power of negation, i.e., the power of criticism and transcendence. It criticises the given world, and goes beyond it. This power of going beyond the 'given' constitutes the essence of subjectivity.

The method of bi-dimensional scheme is the method of 'transcendentalism'. It is against the ready acceptance of the given. The basic thrust of it is to go beyond the existence to the essence, the existing structure of the world to the 'rational' structure. It is the method of transcendence of the given reality towards the realisation of reason. Concept of revolution, in Marcuse's Marxism, is this concept of the transcendence of the given and of the realisation of reason.
It can be rightly derived from the above discussions that the fundamental thrust of both Lukács’ and Marcuse’s method is that of transcendental humanism, that of the method of going beyond the given reality towards its ‘human essence’. The obvious presuppositions of this method are 1) Hegel’s critical rationalism, i.e., the conception of reason as the power that ‘governs’ reality, and 2) Marx’s philosophy of praxis, i.e., the conception of man as the being who shapes the reality. Both Lukács’ critique of reification of capitalism and Marcuse’s critique of ‘one-dimensionality’ of advanced industrial society presuppose a critique of the conception of passive, mechanical subjectivity on the one hand, and of the paradigm of formal rationality on the other. It is true that the paradigm which is criticised in Marcuse’s scheme is characteristically different from the paradigm which Lukács criticises, that, the former is of an extreme variety of formalism. This is because of the fact that Marcuse confronts with a more complex social situation where reification reaches its peak — a stage appearing as the ‘one-dimensional reality’. This, but, does not, in any way, indicate a methodological difference between Lukács’ and Marcuse’s respective approaches towards formalism; they both rely fundamentally upon the essentialist method in formulating an alternative paradigm of rationality i.e., the paradigm which invariably presupposes the idea of free, creative subjectivity.

The concept of subject-object unity that Lukács speaks for is not contrary to the Marcusean idea of duality, though it seems to be so. Lukács’ concept is actually the concept of a dialectical mediation between subject and object; it does not, in any way, imply the idea of subject-object identity. The very idea of dialectics implies the tension between subject and object and thus stands against the notion of identity. Marcuse’s criticism is leveled against the trend of dissolving the dialectical tension between subject and object; it is against the identity theory, not against the theory of dialectical mediation.
The basic thrust of Lukács' dialectical scheme is to redefine the concept of object as an essential correlate of human praxis, or, in other words, to view the objective reality as the human product. Subject and object get mediated in the activity of production. It is only in a society where subject is not alienated from the object, where man is recognised to be a free, creative being, the subject-object unity gets established. More clearly, the essential requirement for the establishment of subject-object unity is the creation of a situation where the creativity of the subjective domain is recognised. So, to say that revolution is a movement towards the establishment of subject-object unity is to say that it is a movement towards the realisation of the creativity of the subject.

It is clear from above that the underlying theme of Lukács' Marxism, like that of Marcuse's, is the dynamic conception of subjectivity which invalidates, at a methodological level, the objectivistic mode of theorising of positivism. Positivism is criticised in Marcuse's Marxism as a one-dimensional mode of theorising in which the dimension of subjectivity gets eliminated. Revival of bi-dimensional paradigm, in Marcuse's sense, is the revival of the dynamic conception of subjectivity. That is actually the revival of a Hegelian-Marxist paradigm which, on the one hand, acknowledges the creative essence of the subjective domain, and, on the other, refutes the primacy and the autonomy of the objective domain.

The theory of creative subjectivity, in both Lukács' and Marcuse's sense, as we have seen earlier, implies the concept of critical rationality. In Lukács' Marxism, the paradigm of critical rationality is the antithesis of the paradigm of reified rationality. Paradigm of reification implies the procedure of uncritical acceptance of the 'given', whereas, the critical paradigm implies the procedure of 'going beyond' the immediacy of the facts, or of perceiving the given reality as the manifestation of human essence. True theory
involves the paradigm of critical rationality. Ideology is the form of reified rationality; it is the uncritical acceptance of the ‘given’. Marcuse argues, in the same vein, that true theory is critical theory. True knowledge is bi-dimensional; it is essentially critical, that, it criticises the ‘given’ and, thereby, goes beyond the ‘givenness’. Ideology is one-dimensional; it consists merely of representing the facts, not of criticising or going beyond them. Precisely, both in Lukács’ and Marcuse’s Marxism, truth is identified with critical knowledge, and, falsity with uncritical knowledge. The question of the distinction between knowledge and ideology, in both the systems, is to be understood as a methodological question of the distinction between critical and uncritical paradigms of rationality.

To sum up, the epistemological foundation of both Lukács’ and Marcuse’s systems is provided by the concepts of creative subjectivity and critical rationality. These concepts are rooted in the conceptual scheme of Hegelian Marxism, particularly, in Hegel’s critical rationalism on the one hand, and, on the other, in Marx’s philosophy of praxis. The framework that emerges from a methodological synthesis of Lukács’ and Marcuse’s systems is a Hegelian Marxist epistemological framework which offers a strictly non-positivist mode of interpreting the concepts of knowledge and ideology.

In this enquiry, our main thrust was to offer a clear idea of Marxist conception of knowledge which may be alternatively characterised as ‘dialectical’. Marx’s dialectical scheme, as we have argued, has a strong Hegelian import. To this effect, we may identify two dominant interpretations in Marx. The one is the dialectical interpretation with having a Hegelian foundation and the other is the positivistic interpretation seeking to offer a non-Hegelian model of knowledge. We have argued in detail that any talk on Marx’s conception of knowledge cannot ignore its Hegelian roots. The entire justification
of Marx’s concept of knowledge as dialectical rests on some of the fundamental ideas of Hegel’s thought. To deny this will be to deny the real dialectical basis of Marx’s thought and his characterisation of knowledge. In this respect, one of the major areas of our enquiry was concentrated largely on the sociological and positivistic interpretations offered by Mannheim and Althusser respectively on Marx’s thought. It has been shown that as interpretations these attempts have failed, because they did not do justice to the real content of Marx’s thought. In fact, their interpretations go against the very essence of Marx’s thought, namely the dialectical nature of Marx’s epistemological scheme.

After showing the basic untenability of the non-Hegelian interpretation of Marx’s thought we went into the detailed discussion of the Hegelian foundation of Marx’s epistemological concepts. Lukács and Marcuse have become our principal source in the light of which we offer our explanation. Our motive was to show how, basing on the Hegelian foundation of Marx’s thought, one could offer a framework for knowledge which was truely Marxist in nature.