We do not face the world in doctrinaire fashion, declaring 'Here is the truth, Kneel here!'... We do not tell the world, 'cease your struggles, they are stupid; we want to give you the true watchword of the struggles'. We merely show the world why it actually struggles; and consciousness is something that the world must acquire even if it does not want to.

Karl Marx

Introduction:

SETTING UP THE PROBLEM
Conceptual nature of the problem

This thesis has two primary objectives. One is to criticise the positivist interpretations of the epistemological presuppositions of Marxist theory. The other is to reformulate the epistemological postulates of Marx’s theory in a non-positivist manner. Obviously, the conviction which propels us to such a project is that the true nature of Marx’s theory is non-positivist. This conviction is derived from our perception that the whole of Marx’s socio-economic theories has a philosophical ground, and this philosophical ground is provided by the concepts of Hegelian dialectical logic. So, the conviction we have is that the true nature of Marx’s theory is Hegelian, that, there is a continuity of Hegelianism in Marx’s thought, and therefore, the epistemological concepts of Marx are to be viewed in the light of Hegelian conceptual system.

The problem of knowledge and ideology occupies the central place in all the discussions on Marx’s epistemology. Ideology in its usual sense refers to a form of false consciousness, of false knowledge. The problem, therefore, is the problem of knowledge and false knowledge. In empiricist scheme, knowledge is perception; it is subject’s representation of the reality. Accordingly, in this scheme, false knowledge will therefore be false perception, which in turn will imply false representation of the reality.

The interpreters of Marxism who assume an empiricist standpoint accordingly define knowledge in terms of perception and ideology in terms of false perception. Thus, the category of representation becomes central to this framework of interpretation. The interpreters of this school accept the thesis that ideology is the false or distorted perspective which is biased towards the class interests of the knower. According to this thesis, every knowledge by the subject is ideological, since everybody belongs to a class and has class ‘interests’. This has been the dominant mode of interpretation among the Marxist
thinkers.

The category of representation entails the distinction between the subject which represents and the object which is represented. Subject pictures the object through the senses, and this process of picturing is the process of knowing. The data received through the senses are dependent on the object which exists independently of the subject. Subject is at the receiving end, that its role is to passively receive the data. Precisely, the representational concept of knowledge entails, on the one hand, the concept of receptive subjectivity and, on the other, the concept of autonomous objectivity, i.e., the concept of the independence of the ‘object’ from the subjective domain. This corresponds to the crude materialist thesis of the distinction between the autonomy of the material domain and the passivity of the domain of ideas. In Materialist scheme, ideas are determined by matter, that, they have no active role in history, since they are mere passive elements ultimately determined by the material social circumstances. Considering from this point of view, Marx’s social theory, if understood in a crude materialist perspective, will involve empiricism at the epistemological level, and sociological determinism at the methodological level. This is precisely the mistake which the interpreters who perceive Marxism in a non-Hegelian manner have committed. Our plea, on the other hand, is that the discovery of the Hegelian roots in Marx can alone reveal the essence of Marx’s epistemological pursuit.

Hegel’s system is considered to be rationalistic. It opposes the empiricist theses of the passivity of the subjective domain and the autonomy of the objective domain. It advances the idea of reason as the creative principle, and the concept of reality as the manifestation of reason (rational necessity). That is, it contradicts empiricism with critical rationalism, with the theory that reason is conceptually prior to the world, that, the subjective domain
precedes the objective domain. Our whole problem is that if Marx’s theory has its roots in Hegel’s system, then how can the epistemological foundation of Marxism be oriented towards empiricism?. If it is assumed that the idea of critical, creative reason lies at the fundamental level of Marx’s system, then how can the crude materialist, deterministic interpretations of Marxism be justified?.

Here arises the necessity for the critical evaluation of the claims of the positivist interpretation of Marxism which consider Marx’s epistemology in a non-Hegelian manner. To speak in constructive terms, such a critical evaluation will show the necessity for a non-positivistic, Hegelian reconstruction of the epistemological scheme of Marxism. This thesis is an attempt directed towards these two primary objectives.

In the following, we will briefly present the philosophical issues that shape the controversy between the two interpretations of Marxism. After indicating this we will briefly discuss the specific problems with which we will be preoccupied in the various chapter of this thesis.

Background issues

The controversy between positivist and non-positivist interpreters of Marxism has a pretty long history. This issue is so vast that any enquiry that aims to have a comprehensive view of it is bound to be incomplete. As it has been remarked by the thinkers like Gouldner¹ the positivist - non positivist controversy lead Marxist thinkers to two entirely different groups which can better be called as ‘two Marxisms’. One group considers Marxism as a science which has no methodological link to the Hegelian rationalistic tradition.

¹Alwin W. Gouldner, The Two Marxisms, contradictions and Anomalities in the Development of theory, 1980
The other group interprets Marxism as a critical theory which is to be placed within the Hegelian philosophical tradition. Hence, the controversy is between 'scientific Marxism' and 'philosophical Marxism'. The foundation of the former is provided by empiricism; it has a clear positivistic orientation. The foundation of the later is provided by the concepts of Hegel's critical rationalism; it has, therefore, a clear non-positivist orientation. The issue, therefore, is between Hegelian Marxism and non-Hegelian Marxism.

The Hegelian and non-Hegelian Marxists differ not merely in their approach towards the nature of Marx's theory, but, more importantly, in their method of relating Marxism to the various socio-economic, political and cultural problems. To have a comprehensive view of these is beyond the scope of our project. But, some of the important points of difference which provide the methodological ground for each group to take a distinct standpoint in different theoretical issues may be highlighted as follows.

While the non-Hegelian Marxists adopt the method of materialism, the Hegelian Marxists base their scheme on the philosophy of praxis, that, while the former depends on the method of (materialist/sociological) determinism, in their analysis of social phenomena, the latter depends on the conception of the primacy of praxis. Non-Hegelian Marxism involves the tendency of sociological relativism, especially in their view of culture, whereas Hegelian Marxism involves the space for the autonomy of culture. At the epistemological level, positivist Marxism entails the passivity of the subject, whereas non-positivist Marxism presupposes the concept of creative subjectivity. While the former is oriented towards the method of analysis i.e., the method of positive analysis of the given facts, the latter is oriented towards the method of criticism, i.e., the method of criticising and of going beyond the given facts.
The central objective of this thesis is not to go into the details of the controversy between the positivist and non-positivist Marxists. But, we would assume this controversy at a fundamental level of our enquiry or, in other words, our discussion would throw light on the fundamental epistemological issues which provide the ground for this controversy. It is true that the principal aim of this thesis is not to discuss this controversy, but it is in the light of this controversy we will try to reformulate the epistemological concepts of Marx in a non-positivist manner. This thesis is not an 'impartial' survey; we take a Hegelian standpoint throughout the thesis and thereby argue against the concepts of non-Hegelian Marxism with the conviction that the real nature of Marxism is Hegelian. With this conceptual clarification we shall now offer a brief review of the work.

Thematic content of the work

Our discussion in this dissertation consists of five chapters. First chapter is primarily devoted into the enquiry of the Hegelian roots of Marx's method. We start our enquiry with an exposition of Hegelian dialectics. Dialectics, for Hegel, is primarily a method by which he overcomes the contradiction between reason and reality. In opposition to Kant, Hegel assumes that reason is the essence of reality or, in other words, reality is the manifestation of the rational necessity. Every being is to be understood in terms of the essence that underlies it. Every being has essence and existence. In Hegel's observation, being involves the contradiction between essence and existence which constitutes its negativity. For overcoming this contradiction, the being goes under the conceptual necessity of becoming another. Every being involves negativity and its overcoming. Every being is becoming, inherently dynamic. We derive from this that the whole of Hegelian logic is constituted by the categories of essence, negativity and becoming.
We suggest, in this chapter, that Marx’s view of man as a being of praxis who creates reality for himself is to be understood in the light of Hegelian dynamic conception of reason. Marx’s view has two aspects. One, it advances the idea of the primacy of praxis. Two, it implies the conception of reality as the manifestation of human essence. To put it in more clear terms, the concept of man as a being of praxis implies two epistemological negations: One is the negation of the concept of passive subjectivity and the other is the negation of the autonomy of the objective domain. In both the aspects, philosophy of praxis implies Hegelian essentialist concepts, the concept of reason as the creative principle on the one hand and, on the other, the concept of reality as the manifestation of reason.

Again, Marx’s concept of alienation as a specific social reality which conflicts with the essence of man, or, his concept of the contradiction between alienated labour and true labour has its roots in Hegelian concept of negativity. The contradiction between labour and alienated labour, essence and existence, is the basic contradiction of capitalism. For resolving this contradiction, the system has to perish, to give way to a new system. This transformation, for Marx, is a historical necessity. Obviously, the notion of ‘historical necessity’ presupposes the Hegelian idea of the ‘conceptual necessity of becoming’.

The concepts of praxis, alienation and historicity constitute the philosophical ground of Marxism. We would realise at a later stage of our discussion that the whole of Marx’s socio-economic theories especially his theories, of value, fetishism and historical development are based on these philosophical concepts; and hence they all have the Hegelian philosophical roots. We derive from our analysis that the true nature of Marxism is Hegelian, and therefore, the epistemological concepts of Marx are to be understood in a non-positivistic manner.
The Hegelian interpretation of Marx's epistemological concepts has not been universally accepted by all the schools of Marxist tradition of thought. It can be shown that sociological interpretation implies, at a deeper level, a mode of theorising which contradicts with that of Hegelian Marxism. Althusser's interpretation is explicitly non-Hegelian, that, it is in conflict with the Hegelian interpretation. Thus, in second and third chapters, the arguments have been given to show the untenability of both sociological and Althusser's positivist interpretations of Marxism.

Discussion in the second chapter focuses on the important conceptual differences between the sociological and dialectical models of knowledge. Sociology of knowledge, especially of Mannheim, is concerned with the problem of social determination of knowledge. Every knowledge, according to Mannheim's theory of ideology, is biased towards the interests of the group to which the knower belongs. This 'biased' knowledge is ideology. Every knowledge is ideological, since everybody belongs to a social group and has group-interests. The sole aim of Mannheim's theory is to present the problem of ideology as a general epistemological problem.

This project, suggested by Mannheim, we argue, is an extension of the conventional Marxist account of ideology as the distorted knowledge determined by the class-interests of the knower. This account of ideology is grounded precisely on the materialistic interpretation of culture. The two theses central to the materialist interpretation of culture are: 1) base (economy) determines superstructure 2) material conditions of man's existence determines the forms of his consciousness. These two theses are said to be interdependent. The material conditions of existence are conventionally understood as economic conditions. Persons in a social whole are divided into different 'classes' which are having different economic conditions. So, in the last analysis, class determines consciousness,
that, every knowledge is mediated by the class-interests of the knower. Every knowledge is biased, and ideology is precisely this biased knowledge. We argue in the light of our discussion on these issues, sociological mode of interpreting ideology is largely dependent on, or intimately related to, the procedure of the materialistic interpretation of ideology. Three tendencies can be plainly observed in the materialist-sociological mode of interpreting ideology, that are 1) crude empiricist 2) materialist reductionist and 3) relativist. We perceive the tendency of empiricism at a very fundamental level of materialist-sociological theory, that at the level where it conceives knowledge as the ‘passive’ representation of the reality. Reductionist tendency, but, is explicit in it, that it undoubtedly involves the method of reducing ‘subjective’ into the ‘objective’. Relativism is the unavoidable consequence of every sociological procedure, that, the idea that all knowledge is mediated by the class/group position of the knower necessarily implies the thesis that knowledge is relative.

In the same section we try to argue that how the epistemological postulates of Marx’s philosophy of praxis stand against the above mentioned tendencies of materialist-sociological theory. That is, we try to show 1) how the conception of praxis which rejects the ‘primacy’ of the objective domain goes against the method of materialist reductionism, 2) how Marx’s rejection of the concept of autonomous reality results in the denial of the reflection theory of knowledge and, thereby of the very ground of empiricism, and 3) how Marx’s concept of man as a being of praxis implies a methodological dismissal of sociological relativism.

In addition to this, in the last part of this chapter, we explore the possibility for a non-materialist approach to culture within the theoretical framework of Marxism. This is done on the basis of our analysis of Marx’s ‘Theses on Feuerbach’, especially nineth
and tenth theses. These theses embody the essentialist epistemological principles and thereby, a clear dismissal of the positivist paradigms which are exemplified in materialist-sociological view of knowledge and ideology.

Third chapter is a critical study of Althusser’s conception of knowledge and ideology. We brand Althusser’s scheme as neo-positivist in the light of our perception that it embodies a revival of positivist paradigms in a relatively new theoretical form. The whole of Althusser’s attempt in the course of his ‘scientific’ interpretation of Marxism is to overcome the empiricist, deterministic and relativistic fallacies of sociological Marxism.

As a ground to this, Althusser propounds three theories which, he thinks, resolve the riddles of sociological Marxism. The theories are: 1) the theory of ideology as the representation of the ‘imaginary’ relationship of the individuals to their conditions of existence, 2) the theory of over-determination, that, the idea that social totality is to be viewed as a complex relation of structures, levels or instances which determines and are determined by each other, and 3) the theory of the epistemological break between science and ideology.

We criticise Althusser’s neo-positivist scheme, not in a general perspective, but with the specific aim of showing that its epistemological presuppositions are not fundamentally different from those of conventional sociologism. More clearly, our aim is to make the positivist orientation of Althusser’s theory explicit. We argue, in this context, that Althusser, by inserting the category of representation to designate the relationship between ideology and the individual’s relationship to their conditions of existence, favours empiricism, that, he retains the subject/object structure of classical empiricism in his theory of ideology, and this lead him to the positivist camp where ideology is treated as
merely a form of representation.

Conceiving ‘subject’ as a ‘constituted’ category is a sociological procedure. The basic conviction of every sociological approach is that society is an objective structure which determines the role of the subject within it. Althusser’s claim that subjectivity is not the source, but the effect of the social totality, we argue, not merely resembles but presupposes the sociological procedure.

A close analysis of Althusser’s theory of over-determination makes us realise that it does not, in any way, alter the base-superstructure model, but only complicates it. Althusser’s is actually an attempt to provide autonomy to the superstructure at the same time when it retains the primacy of the economic structure. By retaining the idea of the primacy of economy Althusser’s theory falls back to the deterministic fallacy. Certainly, we do not imply here that Althusser has nothing to say more than what the base-superstructure model of orthodox Marxism implies. Althusser’s theory does provide a new framework where the idea of simple determination completely dissappears. But we say only that, at a very fundamental level, at the level where the ultimate primacy of the economy is conceived, Althusser’s scheme involves the idea of determination, certainly of the nature of a complex mechanism.

The solution that Althusser’s theory provides to the problem of relativism is defenitely a positivistic solution. The science-ideology distinction, we argue, directly corresponds to the fact-value or, science - non-science (metaphysics) distinction of classical as well as of modern positivism. The procedure of assigning value-neutral status to science leads invariably to scientism where science is considered to be the form of correct knowledge, superior to other disciplines. In the light of the above findings we arrive at the conclusion
that Althusser’s scientific Marxism is the result of a positivist reading of Marx’s theory, the procedure involved in which is not fundamentally different from that of ‘sociological Marxism’.

In the fourth chapter, we attempt to reveal the availability of a non-positivist paradigm of knowledge within the theoretical framework of Marxism. We observe that ‘praxis’ and ‘historicity’ are the two fundamental concepts upon which such a paradigm can be constructed. Both the concepts imply the redefinition of the concept of objectivity, that, they are grounded on the view that ‘object’ is the property of praxis, not an autonomous fact devoid of any content. Obviously, such a redefinition of the concept of objectivity invalidates the methodology of empiricism which assume the autonomy of the objective domain, and of formalistic enquiries which refuse to penetrate the objective domain into the domain of its historical constitution.

We explain Marx’s procedure of the redefinition of objectivity and elaborate the implications of the concept of praxis by going through some of the relevant observations of Marx’s ‘Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts’. Similarly, our description of the notion of historicity depends on Marx’s critique of the ‘analytic method’ of classical political economy, especially of its treatment of ‘commodity’ as an ahistorical fact, devoid of any ‘human content’.

In the course of our enquiry towards a non-positivist account of knowledge we seek support from the theories of George Lukács and Herbert Marcuse who have tried to develop the Hegelian presuppositions of Marx’s theory into a fulfledged critique of positivism. The theories are namely 1) theory of reification and 2) theory of one-dimensionality. Theory of reification of Lukács is actually an extension of Marx’s theory of commodity
fetishism. Fetishism, in Marx's formulation, is a phenomenon specific to a particular system of production where the products of labour assume an objective value, a supra-historical power, and confront man by virtue of this power. It is a phenomenon specific to a system where man is governed by the objects. This, Lukács observes, results in a major cultural crisis, in the reification of consciousness. Human rationality, in a system where consciousness is governed by the objects, turns to be more and more abstract and formal. On the one hand, it turns to be a form of recognition of the given facts as the 'abstract' categories totally detached from their human essence, and on the other, it turns to be lost in the 'immediacy' of the facts, impotent to go beyond the appearance of the facts. 'Reified consciousness', in Lukács sense, implies 'formalised' rationality. This formalism, Lukács argues, is the basis of all the positivist paradigms of rationality.

Reified consciousness is false consciousness. The problem of ideology, of false knowledge, is to be understood, in Lukács' Marxism, as the problem of reified consciousness, that, ideology is to be viewed as a form of reified rationality. True knowledge, obviously, implies the paradigm of critical rationality which penetrates the 'givenness' of the facts, which understands the facts as the manifestation of human essence. The concept of knowledge and ideology implied in Lukács' theory of reification is not merely different from, but also critical of both the sociological and the 'neo-positivist' conceptions.

Herbert Marcuse's theory of 'one dimensionality' is a still more powerful critique of positivist paradigms of rationality. We, in the same chapter, attempt to have a brief exposition of Marcuse's theory mainly to show that how Marcuse develops Marxism into a critical theory of positivism.

In Marcuse's observation, the assimilation of the subject into the object provides the
conceptual ground for the one-dimensional technological world. This assimilation gives birth to a pattern of one-dimensional thought, more clearly, to the paradigm of one-dimensional rationality. This is the paradigm central to all the positivist projects such as behaviourism, operationalism, etc.

The characteristic feature of all the behaviourist and operationalist methods is the translation of the ‘subjective’ into the ‘objective’, either into the behavioural patterns or to the set of operations which are objectively verifiable. This is precisely the method of ‘assimilation’. To assimilate subject into the object is to eliminate autonomous, creative subjectivity. This is to establish a one-dimensional system which lacks the dimension of criticism. The paradigm of one-dimensional rationality is actually the paradigm of uncritical rationality.

It is explicit that true consciousness, in Marcuse’s observation, implies the paradigm of bi-dimensional rationality, i.e., the mode of thought which has the dimension of criticism. And, false consciousness implies the paradigm of one-dimensional rationality i.e., a mode of thought which lacks the dimension of criticism. True knowledge, in Marcuse’s sense is the critical knowledge which criticises and, thereby, goes beyond the immediacy of the facts. False knowledge is uncritical; it is the uncritical acceptance of the given facts. The problem of knowledge and ideology, thus, is to be understood as the problem of critical and uncritical rationality.

In the concluding chapter, we attempt to have a close look into the epistemological assumptions of both Lukács’ and Marcuse’s Marxisms, and to show the fundamental similarity between them. It is plain that the procedure of identifying truth with the critical knowledge, i.e., the knowledge which presupposes critical rationality, and falsity with the
'uncritical' knowledge i.e., the knowledge which presupposes uncritical rationality, is a Hegelian procedure. The epistemological thrust involved in it is that of critical rationalism, that of the concept of reason as a creative, critical principle conceptually prior to the world. Both Lukács' and Marcuse's reading of Marx, therefore, is fundamentally Hegelian; it is of the nature of a critical rationalist reconstruction of Marx's conceptual system. An epistemological synthesis of Lukács' and Marcuse's systems provides us with a platform where we can have a Hegelian Marxist account of knowledge and ideology.