CHAPTER II

'The life of the Idea, and the Hegel-Marx relation'.

"But in order to rise it is not enough to do so in thought and leave hanging over one's actual sensuous head the actual, sensuous yoke which is not refined away by ideas. Nevertheless, absolute criticism has at least learned... the art of transforming real, objective chains existing outside me into merely ideal, merely subjective chains existing in me and hence the art of transforming all external, sensuous struggles into mere struggles of thought".

Karl Marx, 'The Holy Family'.
German *Idealism* paved the way for a theoretical and political revolution in philosophy. The Renaissance transformation had already brought along with a rising bourgeoisie, the growth of towns and the creation of a new commerce and manufacture, as well as a change in its philosophical perspectives where ceased to be a merely 'theoretical animal' and scientific knowledge as a practice could not seek its relevance within itself but had to become an integral part of the growing capitalist mode of production.

"Just as the system of heavens could not satisfy the navigational needs of the new commercial age of the Renaissance, so the social philosophy of the Middle Ages could not satisfy its economic demands". ¹

With the exception of Rousseau who regarded human socialized praxis which created industry and its technology as having a degrading influence on humanity, the Enlightenment period's thinkers and artists both theoretically and in practice affirmed and celebrated the positive effects of the transformation and the knowledge of natural forces although this evaluation was in the service of the economic interests of the bourgeoisie. More, Bacon, Descartes and the English economists remained in the mainstream of this new philosophical perspective which incorporated within Reason the domination and remodification of Nature and at the same time extolled contemplation as the
ultimate task of man. This paradoxical idealist 'dilemma' is symptomatic of the bourgeois philosopher of all periods in history who cannot afford to be left behind by the constantly developing mode of production within a society. This contingent form of dualism is apparent in Leonard Da Vinci's comments on painting as an activity:

"The scientific and true principles of painting ... are understood by the mind alone and entail no manual operation; and they constitute the science of painting which remains in the minds of its contemplators; and from it is then born the actual creation, which is far superior in dignity to the contemplation or science which preceded it".  

Both epistemologically and in the method of science this had long-term significant consequences. The classical economists (Adam Smith, Ricardo) recognized the central importance of human labour as being the generating source of all material wealth and value but a ruling class point of view prevented a further development of a science. For Kant this problem took on a different form. Representative of the most illuminating high point of the Enlightenment tradition he emphasised that man is a thinking being because he is a natural being, the emphasis being on the naturalness of man, his understanding and at the same time insisted that science is the only true form of knowledge. The critical climate
was predominantly Protestant in that the problems of liberty, of ethics were sought and resolved in culture itself. The French Revolution’s attempt to establish reason in politics was abandoned. Liberty had become an internalised value and a recourse to a creation of goodness, beauty, truth was sought in superstructural forms - philosophy, literature, art and religion. On the other hand the British empiricists e.g. Locke and Hume, Berkeley as well, provided in philosophy a strong opposition to the existent European rationalist position. Kant tried to resolve the two irreconciliable epistemologies by providing a system where empirical data could be organised. The principles for the organisation of sensations and impressions were embedded in the human mind. The forms of 'intuition' and the categories of 'understanding' were the invariant and they were 'a priori'. This was designated as 'transcendental consciousness'. The designation of 'transcendental aperception' provided the thinking subject within every experience. This first critique, the Critique of Pure Reason' known as the 'Copernican Revolution' is probably in itself the most complex expression of a debate which originated with Plato and Aristotle and continued with Descartes and Hume. Plato emphasised the transcendental, the noetic aspects of reason which was strongly permeated with an intuitive or mystical
quality and the distinction between noumenon and phenomenon. Aristotle affirmed reason's capacity for discovering the forms, the fundamental structures which made it possible for human knowledge to contain not only the qualities of necessity and universality but also to create a possibility of the inductive knowledge of trans-empirical realities. Hume posed the question of necessity to that of causality - that the category of causality is itself a derivation from sense impressions. Along with these developments, the Cartesian dualism between the subject as 'self' and the sphere of the external world, and Locke's attack on the innate idea theory with empirical theory, were the major nodal points of the history of epistemology in Western philosophy. The 'Critique of Practical Reason' dealt with the practical or ethical function of pure reason; the discovery of the a priori laws of the rational will. It probably stands in metaphysics (although Kant attempted a science of metaphysics) as the strongest critique of the Humean contention that morality and reason had their roots, that they were a derivation from subjectivity and passions. Man is both a natural being and a moral subject. The dualistic separation epistemologically however, is created when nature's world of functions and laws in which man is fundamentally a link in the causal chain of connected elements is that which is apart from the 'realm of ends' understood not only as a realm that is exclusively
moral but also one that is circumscribed to pure 'intent'. Work as the intermediary that socializes man, and then social relationships as the intermediary to man's mediation with nature through work eludes Kant due to his juxtaposition of anthropology with ethics. "Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes (verwicklicht) his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of activity with activity with the rigidity of law, and he must subordinate his will to it". Kant in his analysis of nature recognized its autonomous states, one emancipated from metaphysics and man a part of the landscape. But, theoretically Kant was unable in the light of the naturality of man, to grasp the intrinsic socialization which is the force productive of history. Here the moral world remained the theoretical obstacle. As Coletti in a comment on Frankfurt School politics stated: "Because of this, nature remains a 'half' reality and the most exalted insight to which man can aspire, qua 'natural creature' is that of a well-tempered 'critical philosophy' i.e. 'a humanism of the intellect'." The world of projects and idées that lie behind industry is hardly subjective and anthropomorphic precisely because the knowledge that sustains that practice is not metaphysics
but science. (I must add that these observations are inadequate but the focus here is not on Kant).

After Kant, Hegelian philosophy symbolised the arrival of the highest order of Idealism. It moved over the cracks that Kantian idealism had developed by holding that reason is not human thought alone but the Totality of things, the Absolute and possessing therefore a character which united the worlds of sense and reason. Spiritual activity carried material praxis with it and transcended it. The Practical Idea was inserted into a movement culminating in the Absolute Idea itself. The subject and object, subjective and objective world became thus the terms of both the practical relation and the theoretical ideal. The other equally dominant point of departure was the Kantian classification of 'things-in-themselves' which were presumed to exist outside of the forms of the mind and remained totally unknowable. Reason was rendered a passive subjective principle unable to appropriate the objective formations and structures of reality. Understanding and sense, thought and existence remained without mediations due to the problems of subject-object being unresolved. Marcuse claims that this separation was not an epistemological problem for Hegel.

"Time and again he stressed that the relation between subject and object, their opposition, denoted a concrete conflict in
existence and that its solution, the union of the opposites, was a matter of practice as well as of theory. German Idealist philosophers 'set freedom of thought before freedom of action, morality before practised practical justice, the inner life before the social life of man'. Hegel attempted to break this impasse in philosophy by investigating the dialectic between history and philosophy, civil society and the state but again within the parameters of Idealism whose tradition demanded that the Idea, equated with Reason rule. Hence we have the oft-quoted declaration - 'The Real is Rational, the rational is real'. The whole debate between the Right Hegelians who rightly enough (in regard to the interpretation) emphasised the conservative element of this thesis i.e. the analysis of the existing State as the symbol of the highest order of Reason and the Left Hegelians who emphasised the revolutionary aspect of this statement in that the very Hegelian methodological law of double negation while stressing the negativity of every institution and every historical system also saw them as a historical necessity and therefore the event of their inevitable perishing to give way to another order by way of sublation. This debate has taken many twists and turns since then and rests today with the debate in Marxism as to 'the extraction of the rational kernel from the mystical shell' i.e. if it is possible to
divorce the method of the dialectic from its Hegelian content and if much more is not involved in this process than a mere inversion - 'standing Hegel on his feet' (Colletti, Althusser). We shall come to this in the latter half of this chapter.

Marcuse is right when he points out that Reason meant a rational grasp, a rational investigation; that it upheld truths, laws and concepts as universals and that all this was already present in Greek epistemology. A 'philosophic' quest was self-sufficient and no necessity was recognised for the practice of a philosophy in the concrete life of a society; a resolution of class antagonisms. The truths that an empirically based investigation could throw up about a class structured society in fact made German idealist philosophers all the more resolute in seeking their unificatory tasks within philosophy itself and declare that material existence did not warrant in terms of 'dignity' to be philosophy's object. It is also true however, that they were nevertheless 'haunted' by this situation and attempted in their philosophy to resolve this gap by posing practical reason with theoretical reason. While the British empiricists Locke and Hume dug their own grave by denying reason its determination and by failing to provide for a method that could abstract from the given, from the particular to the general i.e. the elements of a theory,
the German idealist philosophers in countering empiricism by establishing the supremacy of Reason fell into the same impasse – on the other side of it. Objective idealism remains the high point of this fierce philosophical controversy. The subject-object dualism and the Kantian 'things-in-themselves' category were resolved within the Idealist system by Hegel. Since Hegel's philosophy in its analysis of the dialectic between labour, human nature and the Absolute formed a break with his immediate Idealist predecessors for whom practice as a particular aspect of the activity of the consciousness remained basically a moral activity we shall in this chapter be concentrating on a few of his texts. 'Systemfragment' (1800), 'System of Morality' (1802), two courses of 'Realphilosophie' (1803-4 and 1805-6) and a few specific aspects of 'Phenomenology of Mind' (1807). To determine the exact nature of praxis, the status and situation accorded productive material labour in Hegel's system is to explore the subtle configurations that transpire in the subject-object dialectic, moving over from a religious — ethic relation to an economic and a social one. From the Berne period of 1795 to the era of the 'Science of Logic', the 'highway of despair' unravels itself to us. This epic metaphysics of struggle will remain as the monumental backbone of the Idealist school. Since Hegel, his ideas have remained the fertile grounds for various schools of phenomenology, the Marxist materialist
dialectics, Fascist doctrinaires, the temperate socialism of T.H. Green, the neo-Hegelians of England, the Hegelians of Italy, in particular Croce and Gentile, the existentialist persuaders—Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger and Sartre and the debates generated in France by Jean Hypolite, Kojeve, and Althusser not to mention the host of philosophers of history.

'Eine Ethik', the last essay written at Berne by Hegel stands as the 'earliest system programme of German Idealism'. A mixture of comments on the French Revolution and musings in moral philosophy, these Berne notes reveal the nature of a problematic which Hegel throughout was to be concerned with in his theoretical labours. Both Dilthey and Richard Kroner emphasised the exegesis of a personal religious experience that was at the root of Hegel's philosophic tasks, the predominance of a mystic search of the areas of the irrational while Lukacs had in 'Young Hegel' chosen to trace the tenuous attempts of Hegel to incorporate the political economy of Adam Smith, to establish a critique of his Kantian heritage, to overcome theological antecedents and establish a rationality in metaphysics. The first and second paragraphs are reflective of the Kantian synthesis of practical reason and rational faith. The third paragraph of 'Eine Ethik' is a perfect illustration of the continual shift in emphasis.
'From nature I come to the work of man'. This is the beginning, in spite of a remark to Schelling in 1795 to 'try to go back from the field of moral theology to that of physical theology', and there is little to assure us in these early documents that all of metaphysics does not fall in the area of moral philosophy as Hegel himself later asks: "How must a world be constituted for a moral being?". This is precisely what is responsible for the dichotomy between 'nature' and 'the work of man'. Labour as either a mediation or a formative activity in terms of self-identity is yet to be formed as a conceptual tool for analysis. An attempt to overcome his earlier antipathy towards Christianity and his adoration of Greek society and mythology again surfaces in the Frankfurt manuscripts of which all we have today are the 8th and 47th folios. The foundings of two religions - Judaism and Christianity are theoretically explored. Hellenic as well as Judeo - Christian religions provide a basis for a new mythology whose structure is that of an aesthetic consciousness of love, this love object being absolute. There is hardly an explicit reference made to labour. The subject-object dialectic and a notion of 'Geist' however begins to take shape. The departure from Schelling occurs here, where in spite of the use of Schelling's terminology it is no longer the 'point of indifference', which mutually
resolves nature and spirit but the absolute itself which is for him Spirit, the ultimate reconciliation of subject and object, of finite and infinite. The roots of a system of objective idealism appear here and in his critique of Fichte's idealism he rejects it on the grounds of it being too subjective so much so that instead of resolving and eliminating the subjective-objective opposition, the object itself is eliminated by one of the idea of a pure subject; the primary opposition thus remaining unchanged, intact. Two kinds of subjective-objective relations are predominant in the 'Systemfragment' - the religious relations and the economic relation. The religious quest itself being the object, the mediation is symbolised as an act of sacrifice, the external world known as 'positivity' or 'dead objectivity' acting as a crippling force on the creative urge for freedom; the idea of sin being the other reifying factor. To adopt a religious life was the only journey for a reintegration, a return to original unity or totality. The economic relation is envisaged as a purely destructive one where the object is destroyed (synonymous with 'utilised' for Hegel) to be consumed. Ontology had its base in theology. The 'science of the experience of consciousness' which was to mature in 'Phenomenology of Mind' had already begun. The 'System of Morality' is a turning point for two reasons - 1) The focus of emphasis shifts from religion to the relations between
ethics, economics and society and 2) the use of the tool, an instrument of labour as a factor of mediation between man and nature. The practical activity of men before grounded in a moral world is now visualised as a process of socialisation. The tool is shaped, utilised by the worker and therefore subjective; it is objective as well since it is 'objectively-oriented towards the object of labour'. Labour, however, continues to be represented as utilitarian destruction but assumes a richer theoretical content because now the instrument of labour becomes a point of nodality for the subjective and the objective, the particular and the general, to coalesce. It is of note here that is in the earlier Hegel that we see a more materialist reply to the Kantian gulf between the subject and object where 'things-in-themselves', phenomena remained untouched by Reason and, that it is in the later Hegel that the purest crystallised form of idealism is derived with Reason and thought generating and overcoming oppositions.

Lukacs is of the opinion however, that it is in the 'System of Ethics' and the lectures of 1803-4 and especially 1805-6 popularly known as the 'Realphilosophie' that we have the most systematically developed views on economic activity and a more concretized view of human praxis, the 'active side of idealism' that Marx was to stress later. "They embody an
attempt to trace a systematic dialectical progression from the simplest categories of labour right up to the problems of religion and philosophy".  

Marcuse also stresses this aspect of these documents but attempts a broader reading:

"We encounter the first illustration of the fact that Hegel's ontological notions are saturated with a social content expressive of a particular order of society".

Vasquez emphasises both the anthropological content and the universal absolute that Hegel's conception of labour acquired in 'Realphilosophie'.

"Before considering his major works, however, we should consider the conception of labour which Hegel elaborated in his two lecture courses on the philosophy of reality 'Realphilosophie', in which he made significant departures from his earlier conception of labour. Although labour is there no less a practical, utilitarian activity, it did acquire a new dimension which anticipated the central thesis of the 'Phenomenology', that man's production is a process of self-production through labour. In the first course of lectures there is both the development of the triad as used in 'System of Ethics': need, labour, enjoyment and from there to the higher triad: appropriation, activity of labour itself, ownership of product as dialectic movement and the introduction of the concept of labour itself. Therefore praxis operates at two distinct levels: a) as in relation to desire and b) as in relation to
the object of labour. When the definition of labour is 'purposive annihilation of the object' it obviously presupposes that human will can only be conceived as 'natural animal desire', the teleological goal is the most primitive one of a desire being satisfied, the object of a movement destroyed. Today, after the great advances made in dialectical materialism epistemologically and the wealth of insight provided by Marx's critique of political economy about economic categories, the relations they conceal and the process of fetishisation, these early attempts by Hegel appear primitive. From this point onwards however, we witness a rapid movement towards a perspective where a destructive negative act becomes a creative one. For both elements of this relation to survive the natural, animal quality of desire has to be transcended; it has to be articulated in terms of human desire. Labour provides the mediating tool where the object is destroyed and preserved by a process of socialised activity. "Labour unlike in primitive man holds up to man an object to be desired not through negation but through creation".

Three more elements appear here in these lectures - need, money and the seminal concept of alienation or externalisation. Labour acquires a universal and abstract character when it serves a community of needs. Although every human need may
be concrete, production is for the fulfilment of a totality of needs and this is abstract. The influence of English economists was predominant in Hegel's deriving the conclusion that the material benefits of labour and the process of production and distribution was equivalent to an increase in the accumulation of wealth. But, when production is posited as abstract, it takes on an independent self-propelling character. The necessity for division of labour (Adam Smith) entails:

1. that the consciousness of men acquire a limited character;
2. that labour appears related more to the needs of production itself and not to the needs of the producers;
3. although mechanisation increases the productivity of man as a whole it does not reduce the labour of the worker and further has a limiting and degrading effect on his consciousness.

For Hegel the capitalist economy is synonymous with 'the system of needs'. It is a self-regulating system with a life of its own, over and above the determining activity of men, its contradictions not a result of the system itself but that which is caused by factors external to it. In 'System of Ethics' Hegel had already hinted at this perspective.
"In this system the ruling factor appears to be the unconscious, blind totality of needs and the methods of satisfying them .... It is not the case that this totality lies beyond the frontiers of knowledge in great complexes .... Nature itself ensures that a correct balance is maintained, partly by insignificant regulating movements, partly by greater movements when external factors threaten to disrupt the whole". 23

Along with this birth of a system, a penumbra of social forces over and above the lives of men which Hegel dramatically describes, Hegel uses the concept of 'externalisation' where 'dead objectivity' becomes 'positivity' to return to the life of the individual. The principle of negative dialectics functions at this juncture. The subversive power and domination that economic systems, a product of man himself exercise on individual life is captured in the famous remark - 'he makes himself into a thing'. He recognised the estranging nature of social institutions and the capitalist economic system but being of the belief that they were imperishable he was unable to reach the social class roots of that negativity. His dialectic had consciousness as its thesis at both stages:
1. natural, instinctive, immediate need (desire) --- object --- gratification --- annihilation of object and satisfaction of need.

2. human, socialised desire with knowledge of objective laws of nature --- tool + labour --- transformation of object

creation of a universal abstract character of labour + a community of needs

We notice here that for Hegel to take the subject - object dialectic to a more 'civilized' stage, to build the edifice of objective idealism consciousness itself had to be the point of transformation, of departure. Of these lectures Marcuse is of the view that "the tone and pathos of the descriptions point strikingly to Marx's 'Capital'. It is not surprising to note that Hegel's manuscript breaks off with the picture, as if he was terrified by what his analysis of the commodity - producing society disclosed. He elaborates this in the 'Realphilosophie' (1804-5). The wild animal must be curbed, and such a process requires the organisation of a strong state".25

Marcuse draws an analogy here on the basis of comments that 'describe' the effects of mechanization on man. It is quite probable that descriptions can be similar but idealist and materialist philosophies are completely antithetical to each other and to go beyond appearance to the true structures of
reality is to recognize that for Hegel the laws of capitalist development and a critique of political economy never were either the infrastructure or the purpose of his philosophical enquiry. In 'Realphilosophie' lectures of 1805-6 this process is further refined. The distinctive features of these lectures are: 1) the 'spiritual' humanization of man; 2) the dialectical movement between the tool, instrument of labour and abstract will; 3) the negative consequences of estranged labour.

Lukacs is of the view that Hegel's conception here of the relation between the will and its expression in the instruments of labour far outstripped the conception of will dominant in the ethics of Fichte and Kant. The abstract will receives its content and abolishes its 'formal and empty potentiality' by affirming and transforming itself through the use of tools which recognise the rationality of the laws of nature.

"Man makes tools because he is rational; they are the first manifestation of his will. This will, however is still abstract will, the pride of a people in its tools".26

The line of argument in these lectures is difficult to follow due to Hegel's seminal attempts to raise the dialectic inherent in economic process to a conscious philosophic level and at the same time to determine and examine the contradictions created by these processes on the 'self'. The focus constantly shifts from the positive affirmations to the negative and a very genuine conflict of the dialectic between the subject
and object when situated in a historical, concrete context is thus finally resolved within the subject itself via the concept of the Absolute. Labour is a self-formative process and it creates a communal life and at the same time the economic processes that have been generated assume a life of their own and serve to limit and degrade both the consciousness and the living conditions of the worker. But, for Hegel this impasse is not to be resolved by a study of the class contradictions generated by the capitalistic path of growth. For him the State symbolises the highest good, capable of keeping in check the disparities between the rich and the poor as affirmed in 'System of Ethics'. To break this impasse is to choose to take the idealist dialectics and dissolve both the 'evils' of mechanization and the problem of externalisation created by a community of needs by situating self-consciousness and labour in the realm of Reason, as Abstractions. An illustration:

"The wants are many; to absorb this quantity into the self, to work, involves the abstraction of the Universal images, but it is also a self-propelling formative process. The self that exists for self is abstract, it does indeed labour, but its labour too is abstract. Needs are broken down into their various aspects; what is abstract in them is their self-existence, activity, labour. Because work is only performed
for an abstract self-existing need the work performed is also abstract. This is the concept, the truth of the desire we have here. And the work matches the concept.²⁷

For Hegel, since human life is not sensuous, material activity but the dialectical movement of the concept, man's act of self-creation, self-objectification, confirmation and the final supersession of negativity is itself a formal and abstract conceptual activity. A few pages later there is again a shift from the life of the concept to a description of the sensuous existence of the worker with the division of labour and growth of the forces of production. Note that 'abstraction' in the following passage is synonymous with a higher stratification of labour.

"But by the same token the abstraction of labour makes man more mechanical and dulls his mind and his senses. Mental activity, a fully aware, fulfilled life degenerates into empty activity ... no less incessant is the frantic search for new methods of simplifying work, new machines etc.... Thus a vast number of people are condemned to utterly brutalising, unhealthy and unreliable labour in workshops, factories and mines, labour which narrows and reduces their skill. While branches of industry which maintain a large class of people can suddenly wither away at the dictates of fashion, or a fall in prices following new inventions in other countries, etc. And this entire class is thrown into
the depths of poverty where it can no longer help itself. We see the emergence of great wealth and great poverty, poverty which finds it impossible to produce anything for itself".  

This **description** of social realities however does not serve as a preamble to an analysis of class and that productive activity is objectified in the objects which the worker due to his status of being kept at subsistence level has no access to, until and unless he controls the means of production. Marx in reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology* very accurately deduced that Hegel's philosophy suffers from the double defect of being at the one and the same time both 'uncritical positivism' and 'uncritical idealism'.  

In his "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State" there is a lengthy discussion on the "inevitable transformation of the empirical into the speculative and the speculative into the empirical". The earlier stated epistemological principles therefore conclusively aid Hegel in establishing the final stages of this dialectic - that this actual, this real estrangement is a mirror appearance of human essence, of self-consciousness. The real object when it appears as an obstacle to the movement of the self-consciousness for a higher unity is inverted into an object posited by the consciousness itself and therefore in the synthesis it is transformed, subsumed and appropriated.
For Hegel to change the world, to initiate all transformative activity by grasping theoretically the multivarious elements of reality and resolve all the contradictions therein is to wage the struggle in the world of consciousness itself. Marx conclusively sums up the idealist epistemological thesis of Hegel:

"The only labour Hegel knows and recognises is abstract, mental labour. So that which above all constitutes the essence of philosophy - the alienation of man who knows himself or alienated science that thinks itself - Hegel grasps as its essence, and is therefore able to bring together the separate elements of previous philosophies and present his philosophy as the philosophy. What other philosophers did - that they conceived separate moments of nature and of man's life as moments of self-consciousness, indeed, of abstract self-consciousness - this Hegel knows by doing philosophy. Therefore his science is Absolute."  

Too much theoretical labour has already gone into analysis of the various multi-faceted aspects of 'Phenomenology of Mind' and it will be impossible within the preview of this dissertation to go into questions regarding dialectical logic and method. Therefore the master-slave dialectic is utilised to demonstrate the role of labour in the later Hegel's work and the idealist resolution of negations posited by both
the objects of the external reality (objectification) and practical material activity. It appears that the earlier concern with the philosophic analysis of economic processes, the growth of industrialisation and the transformative changes brought on the consciousness of men is no longer the central concern in this 'science of the experience of consciousness' as the Phenomenology is described by Hegel himself. The concept of labour philosophically receives a further enrichment but it is strictly within the ambit of the movement of knowledge, a critical reflective process where we traverse from consciousness which is split into the consciousness of the object and the object of consciousness (Marx called this an idealist 'inversion') to the final movement of Absolute Knowledge:

"To the stage where it is no longer constrained to go beyond itself, where it encounters only itself, and where concept, coincides with object, and object with concept".\(^2\)

The objective world which appeared as an otherness, as something alien and opposed to the ego, the Subjective Notion is revalued during constant interaction and reciprocity between the ego and object and therefore from the essential, immediate datum inherent in the attitude of sense-certainty to that stage where the ego rises to that of universal ego subsuming in this process all the particular stages and stages of the empirical ego into that unity of the Absolute.
It is not the dialectic of being determining consciousness as in the materialist sense but instead it is the dialectic of consciousness coming to recognise the subjective and spiritual nature of the content and form of being which until then had appeared as alien. For Hegel existence or being is not something completely opposed to or that apart from thought. The nature of things, thinghood (Dingheit) and the things themselves exist only because it is the movement of subjectivity which makes them present. The determinations of the concept of the empirical ego which is subjectivity as appearing in objectivity accords objectivity a still somewhat distinctiveness. However in the movement away from the state of 'natural consciousness' for which the Phenomenology is 'a highway of despair' the empirical ego is abolished and we have the emergence of the transcendent ego, objectivity as grounded in subjectivity. Two principal aspects of this epistemology are that objects themselves are the manifestation of the idea and that in the process of synthesis two former opposites generate the transcendent unity or synthesis by mutually conditioning each other. Any discussion of the dialectics of material productive activity in Hegel cannot be carried outside of this overall paradigm. It would then easily appear as a materialist view of the status of labour in the formation of consciousness.
Titled 'Independence and Dependence of self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage' this section of the 'Phenomenology' covers a mere nine pages of a volume stretching to well over 495 pages. But in the last few decades, it has served as a pasture for various schools of philosophy - from existentialist schools and Marxists' discussion on dialectics and class to serving as a justification for totalitarian political systems. Hegel's dialectics based on an idealist epistemology finally lead him to conclude as Jean Hyppolite has succinctly put it:

"Le maître se révèle dans vérité comme l' esclave de l'esclave et l'esclave comme le maître du maître".33

The most important elements of paragraph Nos. 189-196 are:

a) The ontology of freedom; b) a re-assertion that labour is transformative activity and not mere annihilation; c) that 'thinghood' is a freeing element. 'Life' is defined as the 'being', 'the object in its immediate', and as 'the natural setting of consciousness, independence without absolute negativity'.34 Self-consciousness in the beginning is 'simple being for self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else'.35 Before the movement of absolute abstraction begins at this empirical ego stage, the other, also self-consciousness is an 'unessential, negatively characterised object'.36 To rise above this 'immediate-form' is to engage in a life-and-death struggle.
This results in the first stage where two forms of consciousness emerge:

a) pure self-consciousness – one which is independent,

b) 'immediate consciousness, in the form of thinghood – whose nature is simply to live or to be for another.  

It is in passage No. 190, 38 that the object of labour as invested with value for the bondsman and an object of annihilative desire for the Lord is made explicit. Desire motivates the master to consume the 'thing' (objects) and since he has 'interposed the bondsman between it and himself, 39  he subsumes the dependent nature of the external object. For the slave since he 'only works on it' is left the independent nature of the object. Thus Hegel arrives at the decisive point of inversion in his ontology of freedom:

"The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the servile consciousness of the bondsman. Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every detail; and gets rid of it by working on it". 40

However while in the earlier stages formative activity was the only 'middle term', Hegel in the latter stages introduces two other elements – fear and service as agents for the liberation of the slave. It is fear which pushes unremittingly the slave to labour and therefore in that which he creates is posited that which will endure. It is in fear and toiling service to the master that the slave loses his fear of death
and achieves his independent consciousness.

This segment of Hegel's philosophy is probably the most dangerous rationalisation and defence of ruling class interests and thus is utilised for its perpetuation of a class which sells its labour for sheer subsistence. Freedom is promised and is to be achieved in the realm of consciousness where the struggle is waged and not in concrete, historical life where the State and the means of production are seized and socialised. The darkness and terror of real living exploitative labour is inverted into an ontological and theological route of liberation. The slaving class with its slave morality is deceived into believing that in the final analysis it is manual labour within the orbit of a master-slave base dialectic that provides the route for freedom and spiritual salvation. Since history for Hegel had already been realised the contradictions of social life were non-existent.

"It is not the fact that the human essence objectifies itself in an inhuman way, in opposition to itself, but that it objectifies itself in distinction from and in opposition to abstract thought, which constitutes the essence of estrangement as it exists and as it is to be superseded."
The implications of this critique are only too obvious both epistemologically and in the political implications of this epistemology:

1. For Marx consciousness philosophically is nothing other than 'conscious existence'. For Hegel consciousness is abstract thought. Therefore for Hegel the inhuman conditions of any given reality is non-existent.

2. This idealist epistemology politically serves reactionary ends. A contradiction laden form of life since posited by thought and not conceived as wrought by an exploitative economic system may be left as it is and philosophically however resolved.

David-Hillel Ruben in his discussion of the idealist epistemology shows that Hegel rejected 'reflective' notions of truth and adequacy and that for Hegel the correctness of an idea did not depend on its correspondence to the object of which it is the idea. Sidney Hook rightly comments for Hegel and classical German philosophers the task of philosophy is the rationalization of the existent and that within a system of teleological metaphysics where things are laden with immanent purposes and ends "all explanation is justification, all history is theodicy and all oppression is a necessary logical counterpart in a 'metaphysical harmony'".
Since Hegel there has been an enormous corpus of schools and independent philosophical writings in social philosophy contributing to post-Hegelian developments. In the 1820's the Hegelian synthesis dominated the German intellectual world. With the 1840's we witness a movement which was simultaneously a revival and a protest—the Young Hegelians, Feuerbach, Fuge, Stirner, Marx. In the early 20th century Green, Bradley, Bosanquet and Royce with Croce and Gentile in Italy contributed to further studies in Hegelian philosophy. The Hegelian revival has in no sense been a revival of his central ontological thesis. His actual principal synthesis of a Universe as posited by a spirit whose essence is rational necessity has remained dead. Scientific knowledge has made it impossible to conceive of underlying structures in terms of a Hegelian Absolute Science to contain and govern all knowledge. History and nature can no longer be conceptualised as the emanation, the unfolding of the Spirit. Yet the enormous influence of his philosophy remains—Marx, Nietzsche, the Milan School of phenomenologists, the existentialists, psychoanalysis, the Critical Theorists (Frankfurt School). The breakdown of the Hegelian synthesis and the phenomenology of consciousness by post-Hegelian philosophers and the attempts by phenomenologists to define a notion of subjectivity in situation were some of the major currents. Contemporary revivals of Hegelian themes which are
specifically and clearly emerging are in the existential school, Marxian philosophy and the Critical Theorists where efforts have been made to construct theoretically a materialist transformed phenomenology of the spirit and to create in philosophy a unity between man and nature and the social formations resulting hitherto, this being dependant on a radical notion of freedom. We hold to the position that this movement is an attempt to anthropologise an essentially Hegelian synthesis where Geist is replaced by man. In Marxian philosophy the debate of revolutionary method and conservative system from the time of Marx and Engels was continued by Lenin and has persisted to this day with Colletti and Althusser. Marx's famous assertion in the 'Postface to the Second Edition' of 'Capital' I, dated 24th January, 1973 which I will quote extensively for the purpose of immediate reference, has been the principal basis for this debate - a debate which has served as a starting point and as a principal focus in various problematics in Marxist philosophy e.g. the efforts to construct Marxism as Science and purge it of its ideological elements (as Humanism, as an anthropologically oriented philosophy of man), the construction of a Marxist epistemology where the structures of an idealist and materialist theory and origin of knowledge acquire prominence and the Early-Later Marx debate where identification of the remnants of Hegelianism and determining what exactly
this constitutes in terms of structures and the ensuing practice of a philosophy are the deciding factors in situating the epistemological break.

"My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. Nor Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea' is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.

I criticized the mystificatory side of the Hegelian dialectic nearly thirty years ago, at a time when it was still the fashion. But just when I was working at the first volume of 'Capital', the ill-humoured, arrogant and mediocre epigonics who now talk large in educated circles began to take pleasure in treating Hegel in the same way as the good Moses Mendelssohn treated Spinoza in Lessing's time, namely as a 'dead dog'. I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even, here and there in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the mode of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion
In a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.

In its mystified form, the dialectic became a fashion in Germany, because it seemed to transfigure and glorify what exists. In its rational form it is a scandal and an abomination to the bourgeoisie and its doctrinaire spokesman, because it includes in its positive understanding of what exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction; because it regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspect as well; and because it does not let itself be impressed by anything, being in its very essence critical and revolutionary.\(^{45}\)

Engels in an article titled 'A Review of "Karl Marx: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy"' written in 1859, in his 'Prefaces to the Three Editions of Anti-Duhring', 1885 and in 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', 1886 made direct reference to the relationship between Hegel and Marx and put forth his reading of it being a matter of simple extraction. In the first of the above-mentioned articles Engels in the context of the need for a method which could be utilised for a "systematic résumé of the whole complex of Political economy and a coherent elaboration of the laws, governing
bourgeois production and bourgeois exchange", 46 states that the choice lay between the Hegelian dialectics which were in the quite abstract 'speculative form' and Wolffian metaphysics. Therefore although the former method in its "existing form was inapplicable" it still remained "the only element in the entire available logical material which could serve as a point of origin". 47 It is Hegel's conception of history as evolutionary, as a process which Engels singles out as the theoretical pre-history and pre-condition of the materialist outlook although the actual relation in Hegel was 'reversed' and 'stood on its head'. From here he returns to the need for a method for a critique of political economy which Marx undertook by 'extracting' from the Hegelian logic the nucleus containing Hegel's real discoveries in this field, and of establishing the dialectical method, divested of its idealist wrappings, in the simple form in which it becomes the only correct mode of conceptual evolution. The working out of the method which underlies Marx's critique of political economy is, we think, a result hardly less significant than the basic materialist conception". 48 It appears that for Engels the 'form' is the 'idealistic wrappings' and the dialectics, the method is the 'nucleus' which only has to be inverted. For Engels both the dialectics of Marx and Historical Materialism are the outcome of a single extraction and inversion. This view persists in
both the subsequent writings mentioned above. Marx's materialist philosophy is the simple antithesis of Hegel's idealism - matter replaces Idea. In Preface to Anti-Duhring he begins thus:

"Marx and I were pretty well the only people to rescue conscious dialectics from German idealist philosophy and apply it in the materialist conception of nature and history".\(^{49}\)

In his critique of Duhring he emphasises that for Duhring thought is limited to logical schemata and mathematical forms but that for the materialist it is the 'forms of being' which must determine the 'forms of thought'.

"... Herr Duhring's contrary conception is idealistic, makes things stand completely on their heads, and fashions the real world out of ideas, out of schemata, schemes or categories existing somewhere before the world, from eternity - just like Hegel".\(^{50}\)

It is in 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy' that Engels develops more explicitly the oft-quoted view of a 'revolutionary method and a conservative system'. The main aspects of his reading are:
a) The content of the Hegelian system is dogmatic as it is declared to be absolute truth while his dialectical method 'dissolves all dogmatism'.\(^{51}\)
b) The two domains that demanded partisanship from theoreticians in Germany at that time were religion and politics. Those who emphasised the system chose to align themselves with the conservatives and those who stressed the method were with the opposition.

c) The assertions of the primacy of mind over nature and that of nature over mind divided philosophers into two camps.

d) The revolutionary method in its Hegelian form, as self-development of the idea is an ideological perversion. Therefore it had to be abolished by comprehending "the ideas in our heads materialistically again - as reflections (Abbilder) i.e. mirror-images of real things instead of regarding the real things as reflections of this or that stage of the Absolute Idea".

e) The materialist dialectic is an outcome of freeing the Hegelian dialectic from the 'idealistic trimmings' and 'putting it on its feet'.

Pletchanov's foreword to the second Russian edition (1905) of this Engel's text is an approximation of this same view and he extensively uses Marx's comments in 'Capital' I, quoted earlier.

"In Hegel the course of things is determined by the course of ideas. With us, the course of ideas is defined by the
course of things, and the course of thought by the course of life. Materialism stands dialectics on its feet and thus strips it of the mystical covering in which it was wrapped by Hegel. But by the same token it reveals the revolutionary character of dialectics".  

Since Engels and Plekhanov this simple contraposition of 'method' against 'system' has been challenged by both Colletti and Althusser. Colletti interprets Marx's Preface in the following manner:

a) that Marx is not making a distinction between method and system;
b) that 'the rational kernel to be saved and the mystical shell to be discarded' has to do everything with only the method.
c) that there are two 'different and opposed aspects' to this movement - the 'rational kernel to be saved' and the 'mystical shell to be discarded'.  

Although Colletti's point regarding method is well taken it is difficult to see how these twin acts (refer to (b)) are 'different and opposed'. There is no elaboration on this. Colletti supports his criticism of Engels with whom he clubs Plekhanov and Lenin as well, with an examination of Marx's criticism of Hegel's philosophy in 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts' and in his 'Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State'. As a supportive argument Colletti
points out that apart from a critique are also the themes of alienation and estrangement which are absent in Engels' work. But, although we do find a refreshing analysis of Marx's critique as rich as the texts they are based on, the issue which Colletti took up with Engels is absent. He has however chosen to draw the implications that Engels' writings on dialectical materialism were to have in Marxist philosophy:

1) that Russian Marxist philosophers coalesced Engels and Marx, holding that Engels' philosophical positions reflected Marx's e.g. Plekhanov and Lenin (in article titled 'Karl Marx') based their elucidation of dialectical materialism on Engels' writings.

2) that the nett result was Stalin's 'On Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism' which took as its model Lenin's 'Karl Marx' and was based entirely on Engels' works, serving as the official doctrine and creating a theoretical rigor mortis.

Colletti's deductions have much to do with his position on the early writings. However his dismissal of Lenin's reading of the Marx-Engels relationship and the resultant materialist philosophical outlook is hasty. He does not take into account the entire range of writings Lenin devoted to the subject and the positions they asserted vis-a-vis Engels' works and Marx's 'Capital' I. From the references
to Marx's philosophy and Hegel's dialectics and a rabid anti-Hegelian declaration in the early 'What the 'Friends of the People' Are' (1894)\(^5\) which are based on Engels's 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy' and Marx's Foreword, 'Capital' Vol. I up to his 'Philosophical Notebooks'\(^6\) papers 'Conспектus of Hegel's Book, the Science of Logic' (September, December, 1914) and 'On the Question of Dialectics' (1915)\(^6\) (by when he had read Hegel) there is the emergence of a complex reading and more important - a materialist reading of the 'inversion' and 'extraction' by a philosopher who entered the domain of philosophy with a proletarian viewpoint and politicised theoretical questions. Lenin's 'Karl Marx' which Colletti refers to is hardly the fossilised philosophical doctrine that Colletti makes it out to be. Begun in July 1914 and completed in November, 1914 about the same period as 'Conспектus' it is a distinctive contribution towards philosophically reflecting the science of history - Historical Materialism. I have elaborated the main features of this article in a lengthy footnote for it lucidly lays bare the 'germ of the new outlook' and the key elements of the new science.\(^6\) The 1914-15 period notes are a summarisation of the elements of dialectics but there is no simple 'inversion' here. Marx's enigmatic remarks in the Afterword meet with a rejoinder equally enigmatic.
"Aphorism: it is impossible completely to understand Marx's 'Capital', and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's 'Logic'. Consequently half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx".  

This remark has far more serious implications than it is made out to have. The 'coquetting' Marx asserts as having indulged in, Lenin locates in the first chapter of 'Capital' I, and establishes a parallel with Hegel's analysis of syllogisms. Colletti seems to have ignored the Notebooks altogether. It is the idea of the dialectic which Lenin emphasises in his reading of Marx's 'Afterword', and not the extraction of a revolutionary method from a conservative system; the inversion not being one of a simple idealism into a materialism for as Althusser points out this would have only produced a new materialist metaphysics which is certainly not Lenin's theoretical product. It is Lenin's materialist reading of the Hegel-Marx relationship in which the primacy of science and its material object as opposed to the idealist outlook where it is the primacy of philosophy and religion over science that reflects the theoretical practice of a new philosophical outlook. In fact in 'Materialism and Empirico - Criticism' in his philosophical struggle against various shades of agnosticism, mysticism and in his support of Hegel's critique of Kant, although
from a materialist and not absolute standpoint, he mentions Marx's attack on 'the middle party' - Buchner, Lenge, Duhring and Fechner who thought they had transcended Hegel in their shades of positivism and realism but "in reality they had reverted to a repetition of the pre-Hegelian errors of Kant and Hume". For Lenin philosophy is politics and it demanded partisanship. Hence in his reading of the Afterword he went beyond the imagery of the kernel and the shell and illuminated the underlying politics this theoretical revolution represented. Only the idea of the Hegelian dialectic, the concept of process was retained. This when demystified, the teleological purpose it held for Hegel and the system it served ideologically were abolished in the inversion and extraction.

Marx almost a century and a quarter ago spoke of the need to abandon the terrain, to overturn the problematic of Hegelian philosophy since, 'not only in their answers but in their questions there was a mystification'. The need today still remains and it is not merely restricted to neo-Hegelians - it includes the neo-Kantians, the neo-Freearbachians and the Marxist humanists all of whom if I may add belong theoretically to the Hegelian pre-history.
Notes and References

5. Ibid, p. 15.
11. Refer to H.S. Harris, 'Hegel's Development; Towards the Sunlight 1770-1801' (Oxford, 1972), pp. 249-256, for a detailed study of this aspect of the early Hegel.
13. Appeared as 'System der Sittlichkeit' during Jena period and this is the first draft of that section of his system known as 'Philosophy of Mind', published in 'Erste Druckschriften' ed. Georg Lasson (Leipzig, 1813).


15. "In particular, Kant's idealist sublimation of morality barred the way to an explanation of the concrete interplay between man's knowledge and his praxis", Lukacs, op. cit., p. 322.


17. Lukacs, op. cit., p. 323.


20. "Hegel had observed with regard to the tool that labour processes give rise to something general that accumulates in the productive processes and these in their turn, enduing productive or stored up forces of production, transform the world within which subjects may relate to their objects". Habermas, 'Marx's Metacritique of Hegel' in 'Knowledge and Human Interests', (London, 1972), p. 29.

22. "The value of the labour decreases in the same proportion as the productivity of labour increases. The faculties of the individual are infinitly restricted, and the consciousness of the factory worker is degraded to the lowest level of dullness," Ibid, p. 239.


24. "These manifold (italics) exertions of needs as things must realise their concept, their abstraction. Their general concept must be a thing like them, but one which as an abstraction can represent them all. Money (italics) is that materially existing concept, the unitary form or the possibility of all objects of needs. By elevating need and work to this level of generality a vast system of common interest and mutual dependence is formed among a great people, a self-propelling life of the dead, which moves hither and thither, - blind and elemental like a wild animal, it stands in constant need of being formed and kept under control". 'Realphilosophie', I, p. 239, quoted by Lukacs, op. cit., p. 333.


27. Ibid., p. 214, quoted in Lukacs, op. cit., p. 328.


Colletti has illustrated this aspect in relation to Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' and the discussion there of the various Russian institutions. Ibid., p. 21.

"It is uncritical idealism because Hegel denies the empirical, sensible world and acknowledges time reality only in abstraction, in the Idea. And it is uncritical positivism because Hegel cannot help in the end restoring the empirical object - world originally denied - the Idea has no other possible earthly incarnation or meaning. Hence, the argument is not simply that Hegel is too abstract, but also that his philosophy is crammed with crude and unargued empirical elements surreptitiously insisted. This concrete content is first of all eluded and 'transcended' and then reintroduced in an underhand, concealed fashion without genuine criticism". Colletti, 'Introduction', Ibid, p. 20.


33. Translated this reads as:

"The master becomes the slave of the slave and the slave the master of the master". Jean Hyppolite, 'Introduction a la philosophie de l' historie de Hegel', I, (Paris, 1946), p. 166.

35. Ibid., p. 113.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 115.
38. Ibid., p. 116.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., p. 117.

41. Marx accurately pinned down the difference between an idealist and a materialist epistemology in his discussion of the method of theoretical production - "... the method of rising from the abstract to the concrete is the only way in which thought appropriates the concrete, reproduces it as the concrete in mind. But this is by no means the process by which the concrete itself comes into being". 'Introduction' 1857, in 'Grundrisse; Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy Rough Draft', trans. Martin Nicolaus, (London, 1977), p. 101.

42. 'Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts' in 'Early Marx', p. 384.

43. For a discussion on this aspect refer David - Hillel Ruben, 'Marxism and Materialism', (Sussex, 1977) especially chapter titled 'Study in Marxist Theory of Knowledge', p. 59.


47. Ibid., p. 224.

48. Ibid., p. 225.


52. Refer Ibid., p. 12.

53. Refer Ibid., p. 17.

54. Ibid., p. 40.

55. Ibid., p. 41.


61. Ibid., pp. 259-63.

62. It is true that this text is heavily interspersed with quotations from Engels' 'Anti-Duhring' and 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of the Classical German Philosophy' but the selections are not arbitrarily made. Emphasis is given to the following theoretical positions:

(a) The old materialism of Bucher, Vogt and Moleschott including that of Feuerbach was non-historical and non-dialectical. "It regarded the 'human essence' in the abstract, not as the 'complex of all' (concretely and historically determined) 'Social relations', and therefore merely 'interpreted' the world, whereas it was a question of 'Changing' it, i.e. it did not understand the importance of 'revolutionary practical activity'". 'Collected Works', XXI, (Moscow, 1961), p. 53.

(b) Dialectics must include epistemology which "must regard its subject matter historically, studying and generalising the origin and development of knowledge, the transition from non-knowledge to knowledge". Ibid., p. 54.

(c) That development, evolution are not linear - but, "proceeds in spirals, not in a straight line; a development by leaps, catastrophes, and revolutions; 'breaks in continuity'; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses towards development by leaps, catastrophes, and revolutions; 'breaks in continuity'; the transformation of quantity into quality; inner impulses towards development, imparted by the contradiction and conflict of the various forces and tendencies acting on a given body, or within a given phenomenon, or within a given society". Ibid., p. 54.
(d) Materialism when applied to the life of societies explains social consciousness as the outcome of social being. Lenin here quotes Marx from 'Capital', I, "Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with nature, the immediate process of production by which he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them".

(e) Previous theories of history and social phenomena either examined the ideological motives in the activities of human beings or 'an accumulation of raw facts, collected at random, and a description of individuals aspects of the historical process. The Marxist conception of history on the other hand 1) emphasised the development of the system social relations as reflective of the development of material production; 2) that the subject of the study of societies is not the individual but the masses, the classes they are representative of; 3) ideas are in the final analysis tendencies and reflective of the class struggle that certain socio-economic formations produce.

