CHAPTER FIVE

EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MORALITY
Reality, infinite and elusive, has always posed a serious challenge to man. Marx's philosophy is only an effort to meet such a challenge, in and through human consciousness, whereby it seeks to unveil the meaning of life with its unlimited possibilities that exist for man. It is an attempt to encompass the whole reality in a bid to reproduce the same with the highest attainable consciousness. It is an expression of a deeper longing for man's unity with himself and with the world. It is, in fact, an embodiment of the moral ideal of the enrichment and fulfilment of humanity itself.

It is in this context that we find the problem of human knowledge inescapably bound up with the human situation. It is always the conscious recognition of a reality which gives concreteness to the ideals and through concreteness gives them power. The imposing moral force of Marxist thought springs forth from such a recognition of reality in the light of certain moral values. Marx's aim i.e. socialism is essentially a prophetic Messianism in secular language, the fulfilment

\[1\text{Cf. Prem Nath, "Philosophical Anthropology", The Indian Journal of Philosophy, II, 6 (April, 1961). p.1} \]
and realization of which depends upon human consciousness which establishes a bond between the creative subject i.e. man and the objective social reality which is to be created anew. The ethical values are a kind of super-structure erected upon the foundations of consciousness and certain other aspects of epistemology.

Marxist epistemology suggests itself to have evolved from a conflict with the basic postulates of the classical epistemology. It entertains an existentialist faith that world precedes our consciousness of it. Marx criticizes the nature of human experience yielded within the framework of classical political economy. Speaking from the standpoint of a humanist he avoids the errors of transcendentalism and refutes the epistemological conclusions of idealism as well as materialism. He criticizes the objectivism of classical epistemology for overlooking the fact that man is a situated being and that therefore knowledge has to be essentially in terms of perspectives of truth eked out by a pursuit of systematic orientation. Speaking about the circumstantially situated being of man, Marx in his seventh thesis on Feuerbach says:


"Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the "religious sentiment" is itself a social product, and that abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society."¹ (Italics in original).

The great basic question which has exercised the scholars especially in recent times is the relation between thinking and being.² The conflict has brought about a split between those who assert the primacy of spirit over nature and those who regard nature as primary. The former assume the creation of the world in one form or another, others consider the existence of the world as an eternal fact. Hegel explains creation as an intricate process in which nature is merely an alienation, a degradation of the absolute idea. Others, affirming the primacy of nature belong to various schools of materialism.³

From the point of view of Marxist epistemology what is significant in Hegel is the fact that in the course of development all that was previously real becomes unreal, loses its necessity and the right to existence, "All that exists deserves to perish" is the common theme of the thought of Hegel and Marx in the context of human history.

²Cf. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 29.
³Ibid., p. 31.
In the case of both, dialectical epistemology bears a parallel correspondence to their meta-historical positions. For both truth consists in the cognition of the process of transition from the lower to the higher in the endless course of the development of human society, thereby giving rise to the levels of knowledge, without ever reaching the absolute truth. This position dissolves all conceptions of final, absolute and sacred truth as well as absolute states of humanity. Nothing endures except the uninterrupted process of becoming and passing away, of endless ascendance and transition from lower to higher. But, of course, the contexts are different in the philosophies of two.

Feuerbach on the other hand made materialism as the foundation of human essence and knowledge. Nothing exists outside of nature and man. "The essence of Being qua Being is the essence of nature — Being is subject, thought is predicate." Nature thus is the foundation of human existence. This broke the spell of Hegel whom

1 Ibid., p. 17.
2 Ibid., p. 36.
he criticized for postulating the existence of an extra-
mundane creator which is only a reflection of our own
essence.

Marx criticized Feuerbach for abstracting the
real essence of man from the historical process. We
live not only in nature but also in historical forms of
society.\(^1\) Marx changed the very foundation of human
knowledge, giving it a new content and new orientation.

He says in his first thesis on Feuerbach:

"The chief defect of all hitherto existing
materialism — that of Feuerbach included —
is that the thing, reality, sensuousness is
conceived only in the form of the object or
of contemplation, but not as \textit{human sensuous
activity, practice}, not subjectively....
Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct
from the thought objects, but he does not
conceive human activity itself as \textit{objective
activity}.... Hence he does not grasp the signifi-
cance of "revolutionary", of \textit{practical-
critical}, activity."\(^2\) (Italics in original).

Marx thus criticized Feuerbach’s naturalism which
maintained that true objective thought, "...arises only
out of negation of thought, out of being determined by
the object and the object in its true meaning is given
only by senses."\(^3\) Nothing is certain, Feuerbach had held

\(^{1}\)Engels, \textit{Ludwig Feuerbach}, p. 42.
See also Herbert Marcuse, \textit{Reason and Revolution},
p. 270.

\(^{2}\)Marx-Engels, \textit{German Ideology}, p. 651.

\(^{3}\)Herbert Marcuse, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 271.
except the object of senses, of perception and sensation." At this point Marx upheld Hegel as against Feuerbach. Hegel had denied that sense certainty is the final criterion of truth on the grounds; first, that the truth is universal and cannot be won in an experience that only conveys particulars; second, that truth finds fulfilment in historical process carried forward by the collective practice of men. Hegel had argued that labour brings sense certainty and nature into historical process, it transforms the natural conditions of human existence into social ones.

Feuerbach disregarded the material function of labour altogether since he conceived human existence in terms of sense. Not satisfied with abstract thought, Feuerbach appeals to sense perception, "but he does not conceive sensuousness as practical, human-sensuous activity." Whereas Marx conceives all social life as 'essentially practical'.

Practice, Marx turns into a standard of truth:

"The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and

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1 Marx, V Theses on Feuerbach IN op. cit., p. 652.
2 Marx, VII Theses, Ibid., p. 653.
power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice."

Man's cognitive nature is a part of his total self grounded in the ultimate analysis in the practical relationship of human need and its object. For the realization of which he moves out of the dogmatic, mystical systems in search of real positive knowledge of the world.

It is, therefore, close to the mark to say that Marxist epistemology stems directly from the positions of Feuerbach and Hegel, though improved upon by his insights.

The concept of truth is an important category in Marxist epistemology which consists in the relation between a judgment and the reality to which it pertains — a relation which is independent of the knowledge which man has of it. Man's practical activity does not create truth, but only determines its realization. Practice thus is distinctly placed as the criterion and basis of human knowledge, one that distinguishes illusion from reality. For, Marx clearly says, "The dispute over the

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1 Marx, II Theses on Feuerbach, _in op. cit., p. 61._
3 Engels, _Ludwig Feuerbach_, p. 23.

See also Adam Schaff, _Studies of the Young Marx_, _Ibid._, p. 188.
reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question." Marx thus relates the concept of practice to man and his conscious activity.

Human practice cannot explain its genesis or its growth without recognizing materialism as the antecedent condition and without ruling out idealism. The affirmation of material reality was a distinct departure for Marx from the Hegelian standpoint which enabled him to understand the real world of nature and history. Like Feuerbach, Marx did not reverse Hegelian position but rejected it. He did not confine himself to Feuerbach's materialist formulations either. His is not a speculative materialism dogmatically posited as an existence in itself, but can only be explained in terms of 'human sensuous activity' or practice as Marx calls it, if it is to be conceived in dialectical, non-contemplative terms.

Marx was under the influence of materialists, from Democritus to Diderot to Feuerbach, the major thesis for whom was the priority of matter over consciousness. He had criticized the French materialism beginning with Descartes for presenting a mechanistic and threadbare conception of matter in these words:

1Marx, II Theses on Feuerbach IN op. cit., p. 651.
"In its further development materialism became one-sided... sensuousness lost its bloom and became the abstract sensuousness of the geometrician."¹

What was of interest to Marx in the history of French materialism was above all the practical merit of materialism, the moral and political consequences which linked themselves directly to the ideals of socialism and communism. "If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human."² And here he quotes Helvetius and Holbach profusely. His criticism of hitherto existing materialism, that of Feuerbach included is explicitly stated in his first thesis on Feuerbach, as we have seen earlier.

Marx sought to rescue materialism from the dogmatic illusion, from impoverishment and from its reduction to abstractionism. One of the major merits of Marxist materialism is that it does not treat materialism as if Kant, Fichte and Hegel had never existed, since it emphasizes also the "active" side of knowing and incorporates it in his concept of practical human sensuous activity. Marx did not abandon materialism but integrated into it the active

²Ibid., p. 176.
Marx's materialism is a way of depicting that man's history is an objective process; that the vast mode of his productive apparatus determines man's character and institutions and that by understanding the movement of contradictions within this apparatus man can freely guide the necessary order of his life by making it an issue of liberation.

Marx's materialism is based on two important theses, contributing thereby to a solution of the problem of relation of the subject to the object. First, the humanization of nature, showing that knowledge and control of nature cannot abstract the subject from 'praxis' i.e., practical activity. In this context Marx says:

"We see how consistent naturalism or humanism distinguishes itself both from idealism and materialism, constituting at the same time the unifying truth of both. We see also how only naturalism is capable of comprehending the act of world history."

Secondly, the thesis about the primacy of matter, maintaining that if the object cannot be known without a subject, it is absurd to hold that it cannot exist without it.

"Marx's concept of humanization of nature makes it clear that the sensuous world around man is not a gift

1Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., p. 156.
of eternity, but is the product of industry and the state of society. And, as a historical product — it is the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations. The 'celebrated unity of man with nature has always existed in industry'. The sensuous world is a totality of living sensuous activity of individuals composing it. This sensuous living activity is not only a fabric of causal laws but crystallization of human purpose and meaning; the products and institutions of which are the accomplishments of man. Marx says in this context:

"Industry is the actual, historical relation of nature and therefore of natural science, to man. If, therefore industry is conceived as the exoteric revelation of man's essential powers, we also gain an understanding of the human essence of nature or of natural essence of man."

In consequence this human activity becomes the basis of actual human life according to Marx. He conceives history in relation to the epistemological factor of sensuous consciousness:

"... all history is the preparation for "man" to become the object of sensuous consciousness

1Cf. Marx-Engels, German Ideology, p. 57.
2Ibid., p. 57.
3Ibid., p. 58.
and for the needs of "man as man" (natural sensuous) needs. 1

This is precisely where we get an insight into the problems of phenomenology and anthropology. It is recognized that nature can be known only by the activity it brings to bear on man and by the activity that man brings to bear on it. In other words, through humanization of nature and through sensuous activity of man.

What is of significance for our purpose is to note that Marx grounded the fact of suffering in this sensuousness of man:

"To be sensuous, that is, to be an object of sense, and thus to have sensuous objects outside oneself — To be sensuous is to suffer." 2

Here suffering means to be the object of another's action. "Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a suffering being". 3

This concept of suffering Marx traces back to man's natural social, species character through which he is furnished with natural powers of life, existing in him as tendencies and abilities. The objects of his impulses exist outside him, independent of him, yet these objects

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1 Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., p. 111.
2 Ibid., p. 157.
3 Ibid., p. 158.
of his need are essential and even indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential human powers as also for the expression of his being and life. Thence, the necessity for labour, consequent alienation and man's effort to overcome this suffering and to satisfy his needs.

This clearly shows that to affirm the existence of matter as a thing-in-itself, unknowable and undifferentiated is of no use. Engels says in this respect, "Matter is nothing but the totality of material things from which this concept is abstracted."\(^1\) It was related to motion. Motion is the mode of existence and the first and most important of the inherent qualities of matter.\(^2\) Never anywhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be.\(^3\) It is the vital life-spirit, of matter itself.

The recognition of space and time is a necessary outcome of Marx and Engels' position with regard to matter and motion. "Materialism must inevitably recognize the objective reality of space and time",\(^4\) says Lenin.

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According to Engels space and time are the basic forms of all being. "Being out of time is just as gross an absurdity as being out of space." He conceives these as fundamental conditions of all development. But without matter they are nothing — matter which is changing and evolving eternally is none other than nature getting humanized and socialized in a dialectical manner.

Dialectical laws are not only applicable to human life or to nature, but also to the movement of history and society. "Dialectics is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought." According to Lenin dialectics as understood by Marx, includes:

"What is now called the theory of knowledge or epistemology which too must regard its subject matter historically studying and generalizing the origin and development of knowledge."

It is an effort to rationalize some complex aspects of the real: motion, contradiction and totality of social and historical reality. The dominating category of

3. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, p. 239.
totality breaks up into contradiction. It has been conceived primarily as a logic of relationship, of conflict of motion and of life itself.¹

For Marx, dialectics is the development of the contradictions, the transcendence of the negation into the negation of negation which engenders new totalities. It is not universal but particular which necessarily transcends itself. He speaks of the existence of dialectical relationships in nature and analyses the production of surplus value as also the origin of the capitalist system:

"Here... is shown the correctness of the law discovered by Hegel (in his Logic), that merely quantitative differences beyond a certain point pass into qualitative changes."²

Marx applied these laws to nature and history where he found them asserting themselves unconsciously in the form of external necessity in the midst of endless series of seeming accidents. But even "where on the surface accident holds sway there actually, it is always governed by inner, hidden laws."³ Dialectics which prevails

1Roger Garaudy, Karl Marx, pp. 91-93.
See also (a) Engels, Dialectics of Nature, p. 256.
(b) Marx-Engels, Selected Correspondence, p. 131.
(c) Engels, Anti-Dühring, pp. 166-67.
3Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 72.
in nature and history objectively reflects itself subjectively in our minds. The same conflict prevails in society as it does in nature.

There are two concepts which naturally follow from dialectical position, first, the concept of causality and second, that of relativism. The first implies vast process of interaction within the framework of dialectical development, and that the being of matter and motion can be determined by each other in their interconnection i.e. a particular motion can be evoked by setting up the conditions which caused it, thus giving it a pre-determined orientation. This point stands vindicated in the context of industrialization. The whole realm of human activity in fact is nothing but a proof of this standpoint. The task of alteration and transformation of nature in proportion to man's learning and intelligence, is precisely the challenge of man who "reacts on nature, changing it and creating new conditions of existence for himself."

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3 See also, Marx-Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, pp. 229, 425.
Ethically, this factor of causality enables man to overcome his situation of alienation. By the second concept of relativism, Marx explains the historical class character of moralities. While, epistemologically, it is only possible to render the reality intelligible through dialectics, ethically, to admit the existence of dialectics in nature, society and history is to control the structure of reality and motion in such a way that it becomes an instrument in the moral progress and liberation of mankind.¹

The problem of consciousness is undoubtedly of crucial significance in Marxist epistemology. Marxism is above all a theory of social change, as we have observed earlier, and it is not possible to conceive social change without taking into consideration the nature of consciousness. Marx’s moral ideal and the ultimate purpose was to rescue man from an ambiguous, fragmented individuality, liberate him from the hollowed forms of human existence and to raise him to heights worthy of the life of humanity. This he conceived possible only through the consciousness of the entire social reality, as well as the laws in accordance with which a fundamental change could be brought about in social structure.

¹Roger Garaudy, Karl Marx, p. 99.
It was Marx's aim to expound the meaning of historical events and processes in order to solve the riddle of the essential relationship between man and nature and man and society. His objective, therefore, was to enhance the self-awareness and life-awareness of man gripped as he was by the class system, in order to restore the lost unity of man, with his own self, with nature and with society.

There are a number of shades and hues in Marx's description of consciousness. At one place he raises it to the level of supreme divinity "There must be no God on level with it." This Marx said in the context of Prometheus' defiance of Zeus. It is a rare tribute paid to human consciousness possibly because all human action is actualized through consciousness which alone gives it a practical shape. And Marx's emphasis on action is quite clear from his XI thesis on Feuerbach.

That it is men who change the world is clearly stated by Engels in his Ludwig Feuerbach and by Marx in

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2 Marx, Foreword to Thesis: The Difference between the Natural Philosophy of Democritus and the Natural Philosophy of Epicurus, IN Marx-Engels, On Religion, p. 15.

3 Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 72.
his third thesis on Feuerbach. According to Marx "...it is men who change circumstances and that it is essential to educate the educator himself."¹ But educating the educator clearly implies the significance of cultivating the consciousness of men for a planned, morally oriented change of social reality. Again Marx says "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionising practice."² The realization of this revolutionizing practice is possible again only through active human consciousness.³

Marx refuted the notion of abstract consciousness. There is no objectively independent existence of consciousness in the sense of an Hegelian Absolute.⁴ For him, only the particularity of thought and of consciousness is an essential feature of reality. He says in this context "Thought, for example is the thought of a particular definite individual; it remains his definite thought, determined by his individuality and the conditions

¹Marx, Third theses, IN German Ideology, p. 652.
²Ibid., p. 652.
⁴Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., pp. 147-60.
in which he lives."¹ He explains it as a factor in the total life of the individual having as much of universal character as any other manifestation of his life.²

That consciousness and more prominently self-consciousness is the most essential, characteristic of being human occurs as a refrain in Marx's philosophy. Man by nature is a free conscious being "and free, conscious activity is man's specie character.³" His life activity itself is the "object of his will and of his consciousness."⁴ Marx deduces the consciousness and conscious life activity of man from his species character. This is what makes man a free human being but his freedom is lost when the estranged labour makes his conscious essential being and the life activity as a mere means to his existence. Man's consciousness is proved in his creation of an objective world through his practical activity. And as a specie being, he has "to confirm and manifest himself as such both in his being and in his knowing."⁵ Therefore consciousness as a faculty of

¹Marx-Engels, German Ideology, p. 285.
²Ibid., p. 285.
³Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., p. 75.
⁴Ibid., p. 75.
⁵Ibid., p. 158.
'knowing' is the cardinal principle of man's reality. It is the mode of man's existence, manifestation and confirmation in and through which he lives. It is precisely this that directly distinguishes him from animal.

It is through this consciousness that man becomes "a universal and free being" which Marx takes as the point of departure for his total system of reality and thought. Proclaiming the ultimate authenticity of man and his existence, Marx condemns the prevailing social order which causes human bondage and impoverishment. By rejecting the passivity of consciousness and founding it in human sensuous practical critical activity, he lays the foundations for a moral recovery of man from utter degradation. Thus he forges the conscious recognition of the historical necessity for a fundamental revolution — a precondition for the ultimate liberation of mankind.

How does consciousness evolve? Consciousness, Marx explains, starts with the awareness of the immediate surroundings and of nature in general. This stage of

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1Ibid., p. 74.
2Ibid., p. 103.
3Marx says in this context: "It is mere herd-consciousness, and man is only distinguished from sheep at this point, by the fact that for him consciousness takes the place of instinct, or that his instinct is a conscious one." See, Maurice Cornforth, The Theory of Knowledge (Calcutta: National Book Agency, 1955), p. 79.
consciousness he calls as the "animal consciousness" because in it nature appears to man as an all powerful, unassailable and completely alien force. This was also the stage of natural religion when nature was deified into an all powerful god by the restricted consciousness of man.

Then arose the necessity for the historical transformation of nature for maintaining the very existence of human race. Here man grew conscious of the necessity of associating with other men. This was the true beginning of man's social consciousness. But at this elementary level it was only a "herd consciousness", which bound them together almost instinctively. The horizons of this stage widened through the increase of productivity which in turn gave rise to the division of labour assuming a definite form in material and manual labour. Finally, industry emerged in its true anthropological and humanized character as the true historical relation between man and nature, conceived by Marx as the exoteric revelation of the essential human faculties.

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2. See also, Maurice Cornforth, *The Theory of Knowledge*, p. 78.
The immediate effect of this relationship is accentuation on dehumanization, but it prepares the way ultimately for emancipation of humanity. This transformation of nature could only occur through a highly developed consciousness, through an equally developed stage of work, i.e. labour and tools which rendered it possible to create objects not found otherwise in nature. The clearly recognized purpose was a late arrival in human consciousness which gave a specific shape and character to the whole process of production, of humanization of nature itself.¹

Action determined by purpose was the birth of human mind, of consciousness—the prime creation of man himself.² It took a long time for man to rise above nature and confront it as a creator. But this consciousness of man came into being through his social existence. "He exists in reality as the representation and the real mind of social existence, and as the sum of human manifestation of life,"³ says Marx. His entire existence is a social activity.

He produces more and more for society with the full consciousness of responsibility for action as a social being. Marx says in this context:

"The entire movement of history is, therefore, both its actual act of genesis... and also for its thinking consciousness the comprehended and known process of its coming-to-be."¹ (Italics in original).

It is therefore from the very beginning a 'social product' and remains so as long as men exist at all.² Language as practical consciousness is a social product as it originated from the necessity of social intercourse.³

But what is social existence itself? It is an expression of creative, social and productive specie character of man and is intimately linked with the mode of material production corresponding to the level attained in each historical epoch. It is a nature imposed necessity which must be fulfilled if the human race is to survive at all. Marx explains the whole process of history from the basic given fact of human existence. For, he says: "The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals"⁴ — who are

¹Ibid., p. 102.
²Cf. Marx-Engels, German Ideology, p. 42.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., p. 31.
not mere abstractions but real conscious individuals engaged in practical social activity living under certain material conditions and simultaneously creating new conditions.

Relating consciousness to the conditions of man's material existence, Marx explains the phantoms formed in human brain as necessary sublimates of material life and as direct efflux of their material behaviour.\(^1\) This consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of man's material existence, in his social relations and in his social life.\(^2\) The intellectual production changes its character in proportion to change in material production. Marx says in this context:

"The ideas of the ruling classes are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."\(^3\) (Italics in original).

In other words, he seeks to make it plain that consciousness in a class society is primarily class consciousness.

The ideas of ruling class are consequently replaced by

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See also, (a) I.B. Bottomore and Maximilian Rubel, *Karl Marx* (Pelican 1963), p. 93.

(b) David Caute, *Essential Writings of Karl Marx*, p. 95.
the revolutionary ideas with the emergence of a revolutionary class.

Marx postulates the notion of 'false consciousness' in respect of class ideologies.¹ It is unconscious rationalization in universal terms, of narrow selfish interest into forms of religion and systems of morality in accordance with the interest of the dominant class. Hence morality, religion and all the rest of ideology with corresponding forms of consciousness can be conceived only in the context of men developing material production and changing their consciousness with their change in the mode of existence and life process.²

The social structure and state are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals who are productively active and enter into social and political relations. The social consciousness becomes immanent in these relations. But this comes into contradiction with the existing social relations which in turn come into contradiction with existing forces of production.³

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¹Cf. Maurice Cornforth, The Theory of Knowledge, p. 120.
²Marx-Engels, German Ideology, p. 37.
³Thus Marx says: "...the forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the division of labour implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labour, production and consumption...devolve on different individuals". Marx-Engels, German Ideology, p. 43.
Marx's whole argument points in one direction: that consciousness always corresponds to definite stages of social existence. Man's consciousness changes with every change in his material existence, social relations and social life.¹

Strictly speaking Marx gives ontological priority to the reality of "being" over "consciousness" in his treatment of the relationship between thinking and being. According to him consciousness is determined by life. In his Preface to the Critique of Political Economy he says:

"The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."²

This is the wedge which has divided interpreters of Marxist epistemology into two divergent and mutually exclusive viewpoints.³ But it appears that there is

²Marx, Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, p. 11.

³Cf. The Controversy between Leszek Kolakowski, "Karl Marx and the Classical definition of truth" and Adam Schaff, "Studies of the Young Marx" IN Leopold Lebedz Ed. Revisionism, pp. 179-187 and 188.
really no contradiction involved in the two viewpoints, namely that all change is possible through human action and human action itself is actualized through consciousness; and that consciousness is of derivative importance in so far as it is determined by the life and the being external to itself.

Marx here only wanted to emphasize the objective character of consciousness from the point of view of reality to which it must correspond. He only wanted to eliminate the abstract, purely subjective, speculative and ideological elements from the realm of our consciousness of the social reality. He wanted the reality to be represented as it actually existed. He held the correspondence theory of truth as the basis of his epistemological position.\(^1\) True consciousness is that which reflects the true reality. Such a consciousness alone could be a genuine spring of human action and motivation.

Consciousness is very essential but there are other forces at work, too such as the forces of history. This has been amply made clear by Engels when he admits that both the factors are of equal significance, neither has the absolute validity or existence in so far as the history of mankind is concerned. As he says:

"Everything which sets men in motion must go through their minds; but what form it will take in the mind will depend very much upon the circumstances."

Hence a correct perspective of circumstances as reflected in consciousness is a necessary prerequisite.

The process of history works towards a certain ideal set in advance. The actors are all endowed with consciousness, they are men acting with certain deliberation and passion towards definite goals. "Nothing happens without a conscious purpose and without an intended aim."

But this consciousness itself is conditioned by a reality external to itself. In reciprocal action consciousness enables man to comprehend the social reality, to increase his determination to make it more human and more worthy of mankind. 'The Moses' of Michelangelo was not only an artistic image of Renaissance man, or just the embodiment in stone of a new self-aware personality, it was also a ringing call to the men of Michelangelo's generation for positive human action in the light of new consciousness of a new reality.

Thus consciousness helps man to uncover the new


2Ibid., p. 71.

3Ernst Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 47.
social relationships with the specific purpose of recreating a unity, so that feeling of collectivity flows even from the exclusive subjectivity of man, so that individual life is not lost in the vast of human reality. As such individual no more stands in isolation from society but in fact merges with its concrete reality and becomes one with it.

In the vision of Karl Marx the whole march of history was a gradual evolution from the conventional moral consciousness to higher dynamic moral consciousness, a dynamic aspiration of the soul of each for the love of all humanity. Marx conceives the true function of consciousness to raise man from the fragmented, dehumanized state into that of a whole integrated being, not only to enlighten and stimulate action, but to change the whole social reality. To move towards true humanism -- in the direction of deification of man and as such towards a true religion of man.

In passing, we may discuss briefly what we epistemologically call cognition which Lenin conceives as the basic "condition for all knowledge". There is the being on one hand and consciousness on the other ―

the unity of the two is cognition.

All cognition is traced to sense perception for Marx says "sense perception must be the basis of all science". Lenin calls sense perception as the foundation of mental life — an immediate relation with the external world for he says:

"Sensation is indeed the direct connection between consciousness and the external world; it is the transformation of the energy of external excitation into a state of consciousness." Sensation, therefore, is the first premise of the theory of knowledge and its sole source. Cognition of truth in Engels' view "is the business of philosophy" and its content is the world — the laws of thought and social reality.

We have already discussed distinctive contribution of Marx to epistemology i.e. the concept of practice in his consideration of the relationship of subject to the object. With him subject is a being that not only contemplates nature but is also actively engaged on it.

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1Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., p. 111.
2Lenin, Materialism and Empirico-Criticism, p. 44.
3Ibid., p. 124.
4Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 15.
resolution of subjectivism and objectivism, spiritualism
and materialism is not only a problem of knowledge but
is a real problem of life. The senses of the social man
need to be cultivated or brought into being through
unfolding of the richness of man's essential being. The
forming of the human senses "is a labour of the entire
history of the world down to the present."¹

The consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental
revolution emanates from the social senses of man, from
social perception or cognition and contemplation of the
human situation. It gives them an ethical ideal, a
concrete truth, willed and put into operation through
social struggle by men who work for the freedom of man.
It gives them a feeling of moral responsibility which
stimulates highest kind of activity. It makes a demand
for materialization of dialectical necessity.

The important aspect of Marxism is that it gives
to masses which are otherwise liable to apathy and despair,
an understanding that awakens them to a clear consciousness
of their situation, to their historic mission as under-
stood by them, and leads them to create a class organiza-
tion seeking to lift the individual out of his solitude
into a fighting community.

¹Marx, Ec. Phil. MSS., p. 108.
Social perception, and consciousness, thus, it is believed, would be instrumental in activating the proletariat to precipitate the desired transition. Not until "the lightening of thought has squarely struck the ingenuous soil of the people", \(^1\) would the propertyless masses be inspired to appropriate the means of production. Besides, "Theory is fulfilled in a people only in so far as it is the fulfilment of the needs of the people"\(^2\)—hence the necessity for the consciousness of the actual needs, and their fulfilment.

Social change is the result of a reaction of human consciousness to the ripening conditions. The understanding, the decisions and the resulting social and moral action does aim at the altering of economic structure of society. That only means that there must be not only the action of an organized class but also the ideals and the ideas for the social and moral action. Ideas, far from being secondary and ineffectual as has been argued by some, do in fact hold a key position in Marxist epistemology and consequently in his ethics. Ideas which arise out of and are relevant to the concrete economic situation, the needs of the class concerned and the actual

\(^1\)Marx, Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right IN Marx-Engels, On Religion, pp. 57-58.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 51.
relationships of people, tend to guarantee their validity, competence and fruitfulness. The role of effective and valid ideas in so far as they estimate accurately the objective facts pertaining to the reality of man within the framework of history, cannot be denied. Far from dispensing with the notion of truth by reducing all ideas to ideology in the sense of false consciousness, Marx in fact maintains that the truth is revolutionary rather than abstract or idealistic.

Lenin has clearly refuted the concept of truth as an abstract, eternal and absolute concept "Truth and error like all concepts... have absolute validity only in an extremely limited field".¹ That only means that limits of our approximation to the objective truth are historically conditioned. The material dialectics of Marx and Engels seems therefore to contain relativism though Lenin says:

"It is not reducible to relativism, that is it recognizes the relativity of all our knowledge not in the sense of denying objective truth".² (Italics mine).

But in the sense of historical conditioning of a reality that is subject to a continuous process of change and

¹Lenin, Materialism and Empirio Criticism, p. 132.
²Ibid., p. 135.
becoming. For, Marx, therefore, the concrete truth of socio-economic reality is instrumental in the realization of an ideal of his socio-historical ethics.

In the cognitive synthesis, both in terms of discovery and construction, the ideas and symbolic images are apprehended as the contents of consciousness.¹ The 'ought', a law of consciousness, is only an unexperienced value till it is consciously realized.² From the moral point of view all our judgments, choices and actions are accounted for, from within the consciousness itself. As such even the realistic views regard consciousness as of ethical and social importance.³ The epistemologist discovers the elements of an objective system, constitutes the cognitive elements into a paleontological record from which man must reconstruct at each stage the whole living structure⁴ in accordance with the moral values that he incorporates in his total system of thought.

Professor Popper argues that the fundamental


³Ibid., p. 503.

The principle of Marxian Ethics is to "adopt the moral system of the future." But it is not possible to agree with him, because what Marx really teaches is that our knowledge of how things really are, in other words, social perception of the same and also how they are going to be shall determine our moral practice. "The action in conformity with such knowledge can alone be right or moral," as A.K. Saran has also rightly pointed out. Marx claims that his system gives us such a knowledge though it is a different thing whether his claim is tenable or not which we should be examining in the following pages.

All human life is dominated by a sense of purpose and reality and there is no ultimate reality which does not bear a direct relationship to the world of values. No individual, it seems, stands outside the unity of human existence, objective reality and the realm of values. Oakley has made a strong defence to the testimony of this fact.

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The value of progress itself is bound up with the attainment of our moral values through wrenching a radical change and transformation. Marx, too, emphasizes the importance of change as we have seen earlier, the change from the conventional morality to higher moral aspirations of the men for the unity of all humanity. It is a movement from the individualistic to classless social ideals.

According to Marx, moral responsibility is closely bound up with the cognitive consciousness of the truth of the historical conditions. From this standpoint he along with Hegel criticizes Kant's categorical imperative as being abstract and impotent because it neglects the whole of human reality, interests and institutions which must find an expression in any system of ethical ideals. He explains his viewpoint thus:

"In the history of society, the actors are all endowed with consciousness are men acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without a conscious purpose without an intended aim."

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2 Cf. D. Goel, Philosophy of History, p. 179.
3 Cf. Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 43.
4 See also, W.H. Walsh, Hegelian Ethics, pp.22, 32, 36.
5 Engels, Ludwig Feuerbach, p. 71.
The will is determined by the social consciousness of a truth which is of the nature of discovery rather than of creation.\(^1\) It is through this social consciousness that the tottering structure of prejudice and superstitions, which obscures the view of truth,\(^2\) is destroyed. It is argued in this context that, "No ideology can be destroyed unless the forces which inspire and sustain it are destroyed."\(^3\) This is possible through the intensification of the social consciousness, through intellectual progress which will ultimately lead to the realization of moral ideals. Like Marx, Condorcet also advocates a social revolution to destroy the older forms of social awareness for the realization of the new modes of social reality and existence.

The debt of truth and consciousness to moral progress is great indeed. "What does truth owe to freedom


why everything of course" says Warner Wick. The dawn of true freedom is in fact the dawn of true knowledge. In so far as it enlightens the minds of men, stimulates them into action, creates a social awareness merging the individual with the whole it is essential, nay indispensable, indeed. For then and then alone can the individuality of man be strengthened and his social consciousness confirmed. Then only the greatness of man can be proclaimed and the attainment of moral ideals rendered possible.

A few observations, now may be in place about some problems which arise from the epistemological position that Marx has taken. The whole process of knowledge has been explained in terms of a relationship that obtains between social existence and consciousness. Being according to Marx precedes consciousness and it is being which determines consciousness and not the other way round. In spite of Marx's zeal to purge consciousness of its speculative, ideological and subjective elements, his reduction of consciousness to a conditioned mode calls for some critical observations.

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3See, Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 11.
If our consciousness is determined by being, or the sum total of relations of production that means it is nothing but reflection of external historico-economic reality. It follows then that consciousness is nothing but a reflex of external reality and by itself has no power to create anything new. In other words, creativity on the part of consciousness becomes an impossibility. What is more, such a deterministic reflexive view of consciousness rules out any possibility that there could be of the need for social change unless it be posited that the need for social change is built into the very structure of the reflex.

It is difficult to understand how mass of people will ever feel the need for any social change. If it is argued that the need for social change is built into the structure of consciousness, then the ethicist and social reformer does not have to worry about the problems of society, for everything is taken care of automatically. Thus it can be argued that Marx though repudiates the mechanistic implications of materialism gets himself entangled into the same deterministic and mechanistic kind of fallacy by robbing consciousness of its originality and creativity. As such the whole concept of consciousness is rather misconceived as it rules out any chance of human innovation, whether in the field of
ethics or for that matter in any other field.

Ethical values are, therefore, what the external world impinges on man and that, too, if we take it for granted that it is the function of the external world to stamp in moral values on man. For, to be sure, consciousness, bereft of creativity has no power to create any values either.

Marxian view, it will be appreciated cannot explain the subjectivity or individual differences in regard to people living in the same epoch and subject to the same historical conditioning. This point of view does not go with the empirical truth about man and his consciousness which is dynamic and creative and not out and out deterministic and mechanistic as Marx's position implies.

Marx maintains that until the mass of people in totality become simultaneously conscious of the need for social change, nothing can happen. This is psychologically a very intricate position from which he cannot easily get out. For one thing, not all people at any given point can be converted to the same point of view. As a matter of fact, individuals have their own individual differences and resistance to social change. It goes without saying that the resistance to social change differs from individual
to individual and from region to region.

That situations and circumstances have their bearing to some extent on consciousness, is valid enough as far as it goes. But to place human consciousness entirely at the mercy of the externals is, to rob man of the core of his consciousness, to deny him the motivational forces along certain goals and finally to deny him that unique thrill of challenge in bending situations and circumstances to minister to his designs.¹

While there is an attempt in Marxian thought to explain matter in evolutionary context, there is no attempt at detailed scientific exposition of the evolution of matter into individuated matter e.g. the concept of undifferentiated matter which is one of the plausible scientific inferences, does not find any place in Marxian system of thought. Marx and Engels criticize Kant for postulating a thing-in-itself, but it seems they themselves conceive matter as a thing-in-itself particularly when they maintain that the knowledge of the inner nature of

¹New trends in modern psychology away from the mechanistic and behaviouristic conception of man increasingly point to the place of deeper springs of human action in deep rooted human needs, desires as well as goals. Kurt Lewin in his field theory and the whole group of humanistic psychologists such as Allport, Karl Rogers, H.A. Maslow and others have demonstrated the significance of goals and values arising from the deeper recesses of consciousness in determining human behaviour.
matter, beyond atoms, beyond neutrons, protons and electrons is an endless process, the very nature of reality being infinite in character. Obviously, Marx himself has not been able to go beyond postulating matter i.e. he has not been able to lay bare the full mystery of matter, nor has he been able to explain successfully the process through which matter turns into consciousness, much less to be able to explain the higher reaches of consciousness i.e. moral, aesthetic and the spiritual.

Matter possesses the property of motion. Motion itself being the property of matter cannot give rise to contradictions within itself. Marx, therefore, does not explain as to where from and how the contradictions arise and from where the force of creativity springs. If as Marx says the motion is eternal and consciousness is a sort of reflection of matter in motion, then it follows that no state of society can remain ever the same. How then, Marx stops at the withering away of the state and does not imagine that the state of society cannot endure for long and a new society must emerge.\(^1\) Besides, what Marx claims to be a universal ethics of his, does not

\(^1\) As against Marx, Mao Tse Tung believes in perpetual revolution and maintains that moral progress and reformation is not possible without an ever continuing process of revolution.
hold water because motion and its correlates in society, i.e., social movements and changes are peculiar to different places and as such must produce different conditions. Is moral perfection possible? Can there be an unchanging, fixed moral state of society when motion is eternal?

Having reduced reality to matter, Marx has no explicit way of giving any independent status to ideas and creativity. However, here he brings ideas by the back door into the mansions of philosophy. But on any showing, the ideas stand dwarfed. It is implied in his theory of ideas that these ideas can do no more than what they inherit by way of their potentialities from the material conditions in society. That is to say the ideas cannot be very much innovative or transcend the limitations of time and circumstances, to be able to recognize and meet the new challenges. Such moribund ideas as must issue from certain very rigid conditions of matter do surely run the grave risk of failing to see the new possibilities and the new vistas. As such the means spelt out by this philosophy would be no less narrowly conceived and hence inconsequential and even dangerous to mankind.

All in all, the ethics based on such ideas, is bound to be ineffective and detrimental to the interests
of mankind. Marx would have been nearer the mark if he maintained that every age has its own climate of ideas not necessarily and wholly bound by modes of material production, when certain ideas are more predominant and more deep-rooted in the consciousness of people than others. For this is the more general theory of ideas in human culture. But to have nailed down ideas to material reality, Marx, indeed, dramatized a grand tragedy of ideas.

The concept of dialectics too assumes the form of mysticism. It will be appreciated that on this mixed reality which is both rational and irrational, Marx has imposed an all too pervasive - monolithic kind of rationality. It is like introducing logos into a scheme of life and reality which in its rich and varied texture is not always rational.

Marxian dialectic does not seem to be co-eval with human history, for when the stateless society is reached, its function stops since a stateless society is perfect, bereft of conflict, interests and authorities. Marx seems to suggest by implication that there are no qualitative changes in a communistic state of his image. Dialectics, applied to actual human progress, comes to a stop once communism has been attained.

The concept of contradiction as enunciated by
Marx holds good in our opinion only in terms of thought. There are no grounds for supposing that material phenomena exhibit in their change and development the same process of logical inter-relation as that which governs the realm of thought. While it may be conceded that propositions and statements may be contradictory, things and events cannot be. Thus, Marx has very loosely applied the category of thought to material reality.

Marx claimed a positivistic approach in his epistemology for his doctrine of historical materialism. Only that knowledge is real which is perceived through the senses or revealed through natural sciences and hence according to him it was possible to construct a society upon an empirical basis, yet his method is not inductive. He goes to support the conclusions which go far beyond what is empirically demonstrable. Belief in neat dialectics, therefore, is incompatible with the vagaries of empiricism.

Marxist dialectics leads to a belief in historicism, i.e., there is a pattern in history, that if once we have discovered it we can interpret not only our past but also can predict our future. Marx himself maintained that practice is the criterion of truth, but the falsity of predictions has been substantially proved by actual practice. Facts have indeed failed to support the original
presuppositions of Marxism.

To represent dialectic as a supreme law which is universally applicable to nature, society as well as history is an oversimplified generalization if also dogmatic in character. Karl Popper is right when he says: to say that thesis produces it anti-thesis is not correct, as the character of contradiction arises in our critical faculty only.¹ And then the contradiction of thesis, and anti-thesis may not necessarily be resolved in a higher synthesis. By dissolving all contradictions into a higher unity of synthesis, Marx blatantly denies contradiction as any fundamental principle of reality. Thereby he imposes an artificial unity on a flux which is a mixture of both unities and contradictions.

In their exposition of the general laws of motion and development of nature, human society and thought, Marx-Engels are content to offer only illustrations of these laws. One finds hardly any systematic evidence of logical demonstration. Illustrations alone are not adequate to establish any law or generalization.

Saran has rightly brought out the subtle distinction between the ideas of "hierarchy", "system", "co-variation"

"dialectic" which are distinct notions according to him and nothing but confusion and pseudo problems arise if these are not distinguished. To determine their proper relation to each other, therefore, is very important. Though dialectic itself works in a system, the principle of dialectic is a 'system transcending' principle and hence there can be no dialectical system, because the logic of system is not dialectical. Marx has ignored these distinctions of conceptual relations.

The necessary laws of development, logically speaking, can be described as deductive, inductive, abductive or dialectical. If dialectically derived, Marx does not embrace full implication of the dialectic method in the sense that it becomes far too systematic to be dialectical. They are not inductive as we have seen earlier. If they are abductive, they lose their necessary character. If deductive, they cannot explain the logic of change and development. Moreover, they would presuppose axioms and postulates from which they are logically deduced.

The way Engels formulates this law is not adequate

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to its obvious meaning and purpose. All qualitative changes according to him can be explained solely in terms of quantitative changes, which requires that quantitative changes should be both necessary and sufficient condition of qualitative changes. Engels writes as if it is enough to show that quantitative changes are always necessary for the occurrence of qualitative change.

Secondly, according to Engels the converse of the law is also true. This consideration reveals serious logical difficulties. In this form the law states an equivalence between quantity and quality, such that the transformation of one to the other would represent tautological transformations and hence logically one of the two could be eliminated in theory. And it also shows that quantity and quality are two alternative terminologies for describing change. In other words it seems that the law has no causal or genetic significance.

The equivalence of quality and quantity can also be interpreted in terms of correspondence between the two on two different levels of reality. In the formulation and demonstration of this, three different notions are involved: namely (1) Emergence, (2) Reduction, and (3) Equivalence. It seems that these have been badly mixed up. The fact is over-looked that while the first

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two are asymmetrical relations, the last is symmetrical. While the law is formulated in terms of two highly general concepts, its exposition and demonstration always remains at an empirical plane.

The law of negation also is equally subject to criticism. Negation of a negation gives us back only the original proposition. To say that denial of a denial yields a proposition that is on a higher level than the original proposition is to violate the logical law of double negation.

Marx holds that the next phase contains the previous and is higher than it. But this position is not justified by history because if that were so, any particular culture and for that matter world civilization would have moved in a straight line to progress, uninterrupted and without any reversals. This formula of Marx cannot explain the fall of civilizations at their zenith. Apparently, Marx has not been able to free himself from the medieval idea of progress which implies inevitable and unbroken development of society from evil to good and ever more good.

In working out the epistemological problems Marx has taken relativistic position from which only relativistic ethics follows. But if must Marx consider freedom,
justice and equality as pre-epistemological values, then the question arises, how does he know them? For knowing of anything, knowledge is an essential factor in Marxian thought. But, Marx gives us no calculus for arriving at the values of freedom, justice and equality etc.

Marx does not of course speak of perennial values but he does consider justice etc., as co-extensive with humanity, i.e. they are relevant to every epoch of human history, which means that within the framework of history and humanity Marx is a perennialist. This does not square well with his theory of relativism in epistemology. These values are either extra epistemological to the system of Marx, or accepted from the European scene of his times and then worked back and forth logically without convincing logical steps.

We have observed already Lenin's remarks about relativism. To recall briefly, he says that though the material dialectics of Marx and Engels contains relativism but "is not reducible to relativism, that is it recognizes the relativity of all our knowledge." Lenin here is talking in two languages; on one hand he swears by relativism, on the other, maintains that this relativism

\[\text{^1 Lenin, Materialism and Empirio Criticism, p. 135.}\]
is not reducible to relativism in essence. His argument does not hold water because even if the relativism is occasioned by historical conditions or because of our limitations of senses, reason, intellect, it remains out and out relativism none the less.

It would push Marx in a very delicate position if going by the theory of relativism one were to turn to Marx and say "you may be right in your own way but I have the right to hold on to my theory of social truth, since you have already conceded relativism in knowledge". As such it would be difficult for Marx to universalize his ethics which means his ethics also has to be relativistic in spite of his claim for universalistic character in a future society.

Truth is one of the very important concepts in Marxian epistemology, as we have seen. Ethically, the significance of truth lies in the rationale that man must perceive the social truth with heightened social perception or through improved education. This does not guarantee, however, that there would be or could be universal social perception. In the nature of things there will be plethora of social perceptions. This unavoidable human situation cannot in the total context of Marxian philosophy occasion one single truth. Marx unwittingly is slipping into the
camp of idealists who talk of truth as universal and indivisible while his own position would more consistently lead him to relativism in truth.

Like Marx's concepts of consciousness, material reality, dialectic and truth, his concept of practice is also rather inadequate. He does not expound any detailed theory of practice and does not set forth any viable criteria as Dewey for example has been able to give. Merely to emphasize action without going into the whole ethics of it, is not to lay down a systematic moral theory of action. What place the intentions and the motives have and what moral qualities should precede, accompany and follow any moral action have hardly been examined by him. Nor has he carefully examined the whole chain of consequences that follow a moral action. In having equated moral action virtually with violent revolution, he has failed to see any number of alternative moral actions which may be proved to be more ethical in nature and character than revolution itself.

So far as the postulation of moral ought is concerned, Marx, unlike many ethicists, does not examine the whole logic of 'ought'. He takes both 'ought' and a certain level of consciousness and social action for granted. At best the connotation of specie character referred to by Marx suggests freedom as a primary value and it can only
be inferred that man ought to be free. This inference has hypothetically been supposed in the absence of any detailed treatment given to this all important moral category. Moreover he does not look at this category in the context of varied possibilities of human relations and moral responsibilities.

To review the whole situation, one would grant to Marx the right to make a fundamental assumption in respect of material reality, as we would to any philosopher. But when Marx claims to show scientifically the clear relationship of matter and consciousness, as also the potentialities and manifestations of consciousness, he assumes the roles which he cannot satisfactorily play. Marx, despite his claims, fails to show one to one relationship between matter and consciousness. Nor has he any plausible argument to prove as to why and how consciousness which is rooted in material sources, transcends the material reality in history and individual life. There is, therefore a big gap between consciousness and material reality which Marx has failed either to bridge or elucidate. It would not even be wrong to say that Marxian matter and consciousness emerge in his writings as working more at cross purposes than coalescing.

Marx has very hopefully tried to cash in on the
epistemological categories for a trans-valuation of values, in order to realize a morally rejuvenated and happy society where equality and justice would reign supreme. How one would wish Marx was right. But a closer analysis of Marxian epistemology reveals that the transference of epistemological categories on to the ethical scene is logically and psychologically an unwarranted jump.

We assert that the gamut of human thought and behaviour cannot be frozen tight in the mould of Marxian dialectic. For, surely, one needs a number of principles and elucidations to be able to explain the variegated human behaviour and action. Thus, the oversimplified dialectics of Marx becomes a serious danger to our correct understanding of society. It leaves no room for alternative patterns of explanation, and assuming monolithic dimensions tends to become dictatorial. It becomes a monstrous formula ready to devour any thought. Evidently it constitutes a grave danger to freedom and to free society which, ironically enough, Marx himself so loudly swears by.

To be sure, free society and creative ethics cannot afford to surrender themselves to such a monster, for otherwise the understanding and progress of society as of individuals would be greatly impeded. Honest and free intellectual criticism on any showing is a flywheel
of morality and progress.

In sum, therefore, the fundamental flaw of Marxian ethics is that it is built on faulty concepts of material reality and consciousness. The latter, caught in the grip of the former is neither itself free nor capable of causing any free action. Ethics based on such a concept of consciousness cannot but be at the mercy of material forces in which case it may be the very negation of ethics itself; because ethics pre-supposes a moral choice exercised by consciousness out of so many recognized alternatives. We now proceed to see how Marx moves from this epistemological impasse on to the consideration of history within the total framework of his system of moral values.