

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: MARX AND WHITEHEAD

A clash of doctrines is not a disaster—it is an opportunity.
—Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*

There is no doubt that, at the outset, this appears a most curious undertaking. What would motivate anyone to venture a union as unlikely as that between Marx and Whitehead? What can possibly be gained by linking a process metaphysics to a critique of capitalism? Providing at least some preliminary answers to these questions will be the task of this chapter. It will be the case, of course, that only the completed project can serve as a final answer, that the developed union of these positions will stand as its own reason. And so, if the answers given here in this preliminary justification do not wholly satisfy, I beg indulgence and patience. I see what follows as a pathway. Only one completing the journey can judge whether it was worthwhile.

These appear to be unsettled times indeed. The globalization of capitalism is well underway. International trade agreements and loans to developing nations have opened the doors of the global economy and yet protests have raged in Prague, Seattle, Quebec, and Genoa. New York's World Trade Towers were reduced to rubble and the security of this nation's capital has been breached, thousands have lost their lives. A new war has been declared on the United States; a new war has been declared on terrorism. We must wonder, we must ask—where do we stand? Recently some intellectuals have declared the end of history while others decry the injustice of the New World Order. It should not seem strange to find that, the recent expansion and development of capitalism and its concurrent public scrutiny, have led to some considerable discourse regarding the theories of Karl Marx. Word seems to have emerged from conservative, liberal, and radical camps alike: Marx is more relevant than ever.¹ But who is this Marx who is so relevant? Often we find that it is not the critical or revolutionary Marx. In this regard, a 1997

article by John Cassidy in *The New Yorker* magazine entitled, “The Return of Karl Marx,” is most enlightening.² Cassidy, himself a Wall Street broker, praised Marx for his analysis of the functioning, operation, and trajectory of capitalism and for his recognition of the importance of economics as a social force. The irony is obvious—somehow I doubt that Mr. Cassidy’s appreciation for the accuracy of Marx’s analysis has led him to quit his lucrative job in order to join the worker’s struggle. In fact, in the final analysis, his article rejected Marx’s analysis of the source of surplus value in capitalism. So, how is it possible for someone who is and remains thoroughly ensconced in the world of financial capital to simultaneously discuss the relevance of Karl Marx? Ironically enough, this same tendency to separate the theoretical from the revolutionary Marx is seen in Jacques Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*. Derrida, however, wants to keep the radical spirit of Marx alive while jettisoning the theoretical analysis of the economics. But, how can anyone seriously treating Marx’s works separate the economic analysis and the revolutionary critique? Yet, as these examples show, it is done and that it is done signals that something may be very wrong in our understanding of Marx.

Oddly enough, I believe that Marxists themselves are at least partly and perhaps mostly responsible for the division between the theoretical and revolutionary Marx in public discourse. My direct and indirect engagements with various Marxist writers and thinkers over years past have been highly fruitful and yet I have, all too often, left these encounters with a rather subtle sense of emptiness. I have repeatedly had the feeling that something was missing, that an aspect of vital import was, for the most part, being omitted. I have heard a great deal of complex, nuanced, precise analyses of the structure and content of the political-economic critique, which has seemed partially or wholly accurate enough, yet strangely lifeless in a way that Marx’s work never was. I could find in these analyses none of the fire, little of the sheer amazement and anger at the irrationality and inhumanity of the capitalist system, practically none of the disgust and fury that resonates throughout Marx’s writings. Had we grown complacent? Where, I wondered, was the outrage expressed in statements like, “Capital comes dripping from head to toe, from every pore, with blood and dirt” (C, I, 926). Discussions remained theoretically potent but affectively empty and, because of that emptiness, often took on the form of mere academic quibbling about who had the proper “formula.” The body of the material was present but the heart and soul quite absent. Did this mean that the economic analysis was not the heart of Marx’s critique? Why did the discussion of the economic critique appear so often in a barren form? And why did it not appear this way for Marx himself?

On the other hand, some Marxists have emphasized, often to the exclusion of the economic analysis, the idealistic or humanistic aspects of Marx’s

thought. And, as will be familiar to anyone versed in the Marxian corpus, this debate played out in myriad variations regarding the division between the early, humanistic writings and late, political-economic writings, discussion on justice versus interest, religious versus atheistic Marxism, and so on. Whitehead says that the history of philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to Plato. We might say the same for the history of Marxism. We still hash out the old problem of the one and the many, form and content in these new guises. Yet, for Marx himself, the idealist and materialist aspects of the critique belonged together as a whole. The *Grundrisse* alone provides ample evidence that the earlier theory of alienation and the later economic critique are part and parcel of the same programmatic. These notebooks, written in 1857–1858, well after Marx’s purported break with his early “humanistic” theory of alienation, contain numerous references to that self-same theory, discussing again the alienation of labor from its products and act of production, from the natural world, from self and others, from species life, but this time as the emergent result of the capitalist mode of production. Thus, the *Grundrisse* seriously calls into question any interpretation claiming a radical break between Marx’s work in political economy and his earlier work in alienation, and strongly supports the claim that Marx had therein developed “his theory of alienation as political economy.”³

Further, the essential link between the historically specific critique of the capitalist mode of production and the existential alienation that it produces is intended even in the early writings. The very first statement in the section on alienated labor in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* is quite clear in this regard:

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presuppose private property, the separation of labor, capital and land, and of wages, profit of capital and rent of land—likewise division of labor, competition, the concept of exchange-value, etc. On the basis of political economy itself, in its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity, and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities. (EPM, 69)

It is from this point that the discussion of alienation begins. In other words, we start with capitalist social relations, they are presupposed, and this condition of estrangement is their result. Thus, Marx situates the analysis of the condition of alienation within the material conditions of the capitalist economy, which very conditions are the subject of analysis in both the *Grundrisse* and the three volumes of *Capital*. It indeed seems that in the early writings Marx is uncovering the fundamental problematic existential outcome of the capitalist form of political economy and, in the later writings, elucidating the

structure that leads both into and out of that outcome. Thus, he moves from the general result to the specific conditions that produce that result; alienation is a philosophical ontological problem, a condition of estrangement from forms of relatedness proper to human life, but it is simultaneously one that is produced as a specific historical/material form of social relations.

Carol Gould captures the point well, seeing the whole of Marx's work as a "radical transformation of traditional philosophy . . . accomplished by means of Marx's striking synthesis of systematic philosophy and social theory"⁴ and she reconstructs this synthesis in the form of a social ontology that "provides a single foundation both for his analysis of capitalism and of other social forms, and for his theory of being human—of the nature of human activity, its alienated forms and the possibilities that may be realized by this activity."⁵

But what does this mean for the development of Marxism? I regret to say that, as far as I can tell from current discussion, Gould's work seems to have meant little. The same debates rage unabated. The sides are staked out and the parties rarely move. They merely take on new forms with the passing years. There are certainly exceptions, but they are, I fear, few and far between. Even Jürgen Habermas, the self-proclaimed "last Marxist," has difficulty seeing a clear connection between the levels of economic and social production.

Marx does move at the two analytical levels of 'system' and 'lifeworld,' but their separation is not really presupposed in his basic economic concepts . . . the interconnection between the two types of theoretical *statements* could be explained . . . only if it is assumed that there is a logical (in the Hegelian sense) connection between the development of the system and the structural transformation of the lifeworld.⁶

Habermas claims that Marx's distinction between the two levels remains merely formal and semantic and that, in order to forge a real link between the formal analysis of the economic system and its application to the lifeworld, "it would have been necessary to engage in empirical investigations of real abstraction, that is, of the transformation of concrete into abstract labor."⁷ As much as I disagree with a great deal of Habermas's reading of Marx's work, particularly with his interpretations of the labor theory of value, I must admit to understanding and supporting his demand for a formal, logical, and especially, a real connection between the political economy and the form of life it produces.

Gould correctly indicates that Marx has undertaken "a radical transformation of traditional philosophy" but we seem still to be catching up to this transformation.⁸ Sartre diagnoses the difficulty as follows:

Marx's originality lies in the fact that, in opposition to Hegel, he demonstrated that *History is in development*, that *Being is irreducible to Knowledge*, and, also, that he preserved the dialectical movement both in Being and in Knowledge. He was correct, *practically*. But having failed to *re-think the dialectic*, Marxists have played the Positivist game.⁹

What Marx himself left unspoken and undeveloped or underdeveloped has understandably been the source of great consternation, much debate, and egregious errors by Marxists and, finally, is the impetus behind my assertion that the critique of capitalism needs to be grounded in an adequate dialectical metaphysics. Marx cannot have understood "economic" in the one-sided and truncated form that it takes within a capitalist mode of production but rather as a historical expression of the way in which human life produces itself. There must be an ontological significance to the economics that is not merely an accidental result but is its essential nature and, for this to be the case, economic production has to be directly expressible as ontological production. But such expression would require an ontological/metaphysical groundwork within which economics and ontology could be understood as coterminous or at least concomitant notions. This underlying foundation can, I believe, be found in Whitehead's process philosophy.

Now, as capitalism reaches into new labor markets, as it ensconces itself ever more deeply in dependent peripheral nations, as NAFTA and GAAT loosen the legal fetters that bound the progress of its globalization in the past, as we contemplate implementing the MAI to further liberate "trade," as the "project for a new American century" is underway in The Middle East, now more than ever, if we are going to turn to Marx at all, we need to get Marx right. This improbable alliance of Marx and Whitehead may well constitute my desperate measure for what I consider to be a time of desperate need to see Marx aright, to understand the absolute inseparability of the economic analysis from the radical critique. It is my attempt to prepare and present a framework for re-vision, to develop a deeper understanding of dialectics and dialectical being, to allow that understanding to inform our analyses and critiques of our capitalist form of social relations and our visions beyond those relations.

Sometimes, our ways of seeing become too well worn, too familiar, and we see no more. Sometimes, therefore, we need new ways of seeing. William James suggests in "The Sentiment of Rationality" that philosophers "desire to attain a conception of the frame of things which shall on the whole be more rational."¹⁰ My work here constitutes a frame for the Marxist critique of capitalism which is, I believe, more rational—both in terms of its consistency with the whole of Marx's works and in terms of an appropriate unfolding of

the philosophical implications of that work. It is more rational in the pragmatic sense of that term. Through this rational frame I hope to spur creative advance and perhaps even to lure feeling, to open a new door into the continuing work of critique and construction.

Thus, the use of Whitehead's metaphysical system for this fundamental project on Marx is not gratuitous or arbitrary; it is, I will show, the most adequate articulation of a metaphysical vision which provides the deep connection between the ontological and economic spheres. Process philosophy will help to expose aspects of the critique hitherto suppressed, neglected, or misread, it will explicate and provide the solid foundations necessary to ground the ontological statements made by Marx throughout his writings, it will link these to the critique of political economy, and it will allow the critique to reach effectively into the present reality of capitalism and into the projective envisionment of a socialist future. Therefore, implicit in my work here will be a suggestion that process philosophy, if it is to remain honest to its own claims, is, or should be, economically, politically, and what amounts to the same thing, socially radical.¹¹

I should note that the concentration in this project on the ontological features in Marx's work by no means suggests that the analyses of capitalist economics (in the strict sense of that term) are secondary or unimportant. In fact, it should be obvious from what I have said above that they are inextricably linked, and this point should become even more clear as I proceed. The beating heart of the economic analysis and critique in *Capital* will be ontological and coming to the critique of capitalism though its ontological roots is intended to make such critique even more urgent. It is intended to provide the "reason" behind the necessity of continued vigilant struggle in the demystification of the inner workings of capitalist economics as it twists and turns through its various historical manifestations and local and national and international postures; but also to stand as a warning that we never forget why we undertake such work, why we quibble about the formulae, why we struggle over the proper articulation of a possible socialist future: "No actual entity, then no reason" (PR, 19). The demystification of the form of economic production is an ontological uncovering: *alethia*.

REGARDING METAPHYSICS

But can one really fruitfully combine the work of two thinkers who seem to be so fundamentally different? Marx certainly appears to be the vehement and violent critic of his, and our, times while Whitehead is a gentle and calm exponent of a relational world in process. Marx fixes his attention on the material conditions of a particular socioeconomic reality while Whitehead soars in the realm of generalizable metaphysical propositions. Marx is the out-

spoken critic of metaphysical abstractions but Whitehead is the metaphysician par excellence.

I am motivated in part by precisely these contrasts because they focus our attention on what is not articulated or, perhaps, inadequately articulated in each system. Marx needs Whitehead to ground his claims regarding the proper ethos and telos of human life and its productive-processive interaction with, for, and as a part of the world as a relational unity; Whitehead needs Marx to focus on the destructive aspects of capitalism as a form of world productive-process. To begin with, however, we must ask how accurate the characterizations above truly are. Is Marx simply and, more important, solely the critic of metaphysical thinking? Is Whitehead simply and solely the abstractive metaphysician?

Let us begin with Marx. The *Poverty of Philosophy* contains a particularly clear articulation of his critique of metaphysical thinking. His attack is primarily directed at Proudhon, who, he says, has a particularly bad habit of divorcing categories from their historical situatedness or simply failing to see that they are historically situated. And, because Proudhon ignores historical context in this manner, he takes the further step of transhistoricizing those selfsame categories. In this manner, in the manner of crude metaphysicians, he abstracts the categories of political economy from the real individuals and real practices and real relations. One can certainly understand why such a move would so distress Marx. If one fails to see that the categories of political economy arise out of historical practice, then one will simultaneously fail to see, or outright deny, the possibility that the system in which these categories are manifest can be overcome in practice.

It is, Marx insists, relations of production that constitute our social relations and produce the ideas and categories of these social relations. Because relations of production are dependent on the productive forces (the material conditions of such relations), the categories are “historical and transitory products.” There is, in fact, continual movement. “There is nothing immutable but the abstraction of the movement—*mors immortalis*” (POP, 119). But here, of course, is the only general statement made possible by Marx’s dialectics.¹²

A parallel critique is launched against the classical political economists (Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, Say, and J.S. Mill, for example). The error of these thinkers is the ontologizing, naturalizing, transhistoricizing of the conditions specific to capitalism. Their tendency is to project the relations of capitalism onto all past forms of social production. The exemplary statement of this position occurs in the Robinson Crusoe example as recounted in volume one of *Capital* wherein Robinson, all alone on his island, isolated from all social contact, initiates all the activities productive of the elements of capital: labor,

value, exchange value, and so forth. According to the political economists, the human being is naturally a capitalistic animal. Nothing, according to Marx, could be more absurd, for “[a]ll Robinson’s products were exclusively the result of his own personal labour and they were therefore directly objects of utility for him personally” (C, I, 171). There are, for Robinson, no relations of production, no social production, therefore no possible determination of the exchange-value of either labor or commodities, hence no capitalism.

The critiques are quite similar. Bourgeois political economy refuses to acknowledge the historically specific character of the material conditions, social relations, and categories of capitalism. The mistake is one of classifying the concrete as abstract, whether in origin or outcome. In committing this error, capitalism is naturalized: so it is, so has it always been, so shall it always be. This is the danger of crude metaphysical thinking for Marx. It bears a striking resemblance to Whitehead’s first formulation of the notion of misplaced concreteness in *Process and Reality*; which neglects “the degree of abstraction involved when an actual entity is considered merely so far as it exemplifies certain categories of thought” (PR, 7–8). Or, as he says more succinctly in *Science and the Modern World*, “it is merely the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete” (SMW, 51), and this, of course, can take place in one of two ways: either by concretizing the abstract, as Whitehead claims occurs in the formulation of simple location, or by abstracting the concrete as is, according to Marx, the case with Hegel, the classical political economists, and French socialists. Marx’s critique is that Proudhon, Ricardo, and others mistakenly classify that which is concrete, specific, historically produced in a given form of social relations as abstract, universal, and trans-historical. Of course it will, in the final analysis be not at all surprising that the articulations of philosophy, economics, or socialism emerging from within capitalism, which Marx classifies as ideological and mystifying, should exemplify misplaced concreteness because such misplaced concreteness lies at the heart of capitalism’s form of social relations. But this discussion can only be fully presented later.

Now, given that Marx indeed engages this critical stance toward abstract ontologizing of historically specific conditions, are we then to conclude that he is opposed to all general ontological or metaphysical formulations? We need to ask whether it is possible for metaphysical thinking to avoid committing such misplacement of its abstractions. Did Marx think it possible?

Marx is no mere critic of metaphysical thinking; he is its reformer. But such reformation needs considerable clarification and development. So, the question becomes: Is there any metaphysics that meets the conditions required by his re-vision? It is my claim that the implicit ontology that would

meet such conditions can be explicitly found in a process metaphysics. But this leads to our second preliminary question: Is Whitehead simply and solely the metaphysician? Is his metaphysical position the kind of trans-historical, abstract, philosophical meta-ideology that Marx so vehemently denounces in his critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* or the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* or *The German Ideology*? Because, if it is, it should rightly be disqualified for use in this project.

Marx's critique is specifically aimed at metatheorizing that either abstracts the concrete or concretizes the abstract in such a way as to yield a merely one-sided position. He specifically denounces any philosophical, socioeconomic, or political formulations that advocate idealizing or trans-historicizing the historically specific. Therefore, for any metaphysical conception to be acceptable it would have to meet two interrelated conditions: (1) it would have to proceed from the real, historically specific empirical condition; (2) it would have to admit that the generalizations obtained from such an empirical starting point could not be abstractly universalized into trans-historical claims.¹³ In other words, to be justifiably used in conjunction with Marx's work, we would need to find a metaphysics that declares a pragmatic connection to its own specific historical/material epoch, that admits of the fallibility emergent from its own empirical origins, and therein, can unite with the very specific, situated dialectical material/historical critique of social, political, and economic relations.

Whitehead's process metaphysics meets the first of such conditions by expressing primary dependence upon real, material facts of experience. In the first chapter of *Process and Reality* Whitehead says,

Our datum is the actual world, including ourselves; and this actual world spreads itself for observation in the guise of the topic of our immediate experience. The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of our experience. (PR, 4)

Metaphysics is nothing but the description of generalities which apply to all the details of *practice*. (Italics mine) (PR, 13)

These statements are of the utmost importance. For Whitehead, as for Marx, abstraction and generalization are permitted only on the condition that they proceed from an observation of empirical reality (see, G, 85 and GI, 42, 46–48). Ideology, as an exemplification of misplaced concreteness, is the inevitable result of an inversion of a project's genesis—of believing that you have access to that which you do not. This is not to say that we have no access to metaphysics, to generalizable claims as to the nature of reality, but

rather, in Kantian fashion, it states that we can only begin with human experience for we have no other data to access; it is an empirical world, one, therefore, which we are always already within.¹⁴ I stress this point, because acceptance of a Whiteheadian metaphysics or a Marxian dialectic requires having made the fully critical turn. If we precritically believe there to be some unmediated access to a “real world” as it is apart from all human experience, we will not only subvert our project by beginning from an unreal abstract starting place, but also will be unable to understand the radical alteration of the very notions of generalization, abstraction, categorization which Whitehead and Marx have accomplished, and in so doing we will be forced back to the undialectical disjunctive view of the real and ideal, concrete and abstract that result in misreadings of each philosopher. It is such misreadings that allow us to classify Marx as the simple critic of metaphysics, and Whitehead as simply the metaphysician. But to believe that all metaphysics is necessarily ideological is itself ideological thinking. Therefore, the defense of the philosophical fusion that I am proposing requires an understanding that critical thinking and metaphysics undergo complete transformations in the hands of Marx and Whitehead respectively and that their unity lies precisely in the nature of these transformations as based on the similar starting point of their projects.

On the basis of such empirical origins, Whitehead is required to meet the second of our conditions for unification with Marx’s corpus: a denial of the trans-historicity or universality of the metaphysical project. He insists on the epoch specificity and fallibility of any metaphysical scheme.

Metaphysical categories are not dogmatic statements of the obvious; they are tentative formulations of the ultimate generalities. . . . [the philosophical] scheme is a matrix from which true propositions applicable to particular circumstances can be derived. We can at present only trust our trained instincts as to the discrimination of the circumstances in respect to which the scheme is valid. (PR, 8–9)

Philosophy and specifically metaphysics, starting with and based on experience, searches for “better and better metaphors”—searches, progresses, but does not claim completion or finality, does not “desituate” itself. “Rationalism is an adventure in the clarification of thought, progressive and never final” (PR, 9). Thus, Whitehead’s process metaphysics meets the two conditions required for a consolidation with Marx: it begins with the real conditions of an empirical material reality and always measures the success of its findings by reference back to that reality and it expresses itself in generality and fallibility instead of abstractive dogmatic universality. Here we seem to have found the only kind of metaphysics of which Marx could possibly approve.

As an initial expression, therefore, we see three similarities between Marx and Whitehead's projects. First, there is a similarity of method whereby each recognizes the necessity of beginning the philosophical/scientific project from an analysis of empirical reality. Second, and necessitated by this method, there is a denial of the possibility of uncritical universality and an acceptance of the historical or epoch specificity of the project. Third, and as an expression of the first two, there is a similarity of critique of those positions that commit the fallacy of misplaced concreteness either by beginning with the abstract and uncritically determining the concrete by it, or by universalizing or trans-historicizing the concrete determinations such that they are torn out of their processive form of being-becoming or, in Marx's terms, out of their production within specific material-historical conditions.

THE PROCESS OF DIALECTICS

A final question must be posed. I have stated that at least part of my intent in this work is to present Marx's critique of capitalism in such a way as to adequately integrate the political economic critique with the more philosophical-ontological elements presented in his earlier works. I have indicated that this task will be accomplished by reading the critique of capitalism through the lens of a processive metaphysics. Process philosophy is a philosophy of historical movement and, as a philosophy of temporality and movement, it is deeply dialectical.¹⁵ For this reason, I believe, it provides a grounding adequate to the Marxian critique. But the question arises: Why not utilize Hegel for this purpose? After all, didn't Marx himself adopt elements of the Hegelian dialectic and does not Hegel's system itself provide a dialectical metaphysics? Why not use the material in the *Science of Logic*; why not use the *Philosophy of Nature*? Is this work merely a redundant reformulation of the Hegelian system?

There are several obvious answers to this question. The first is already implied in my opening pages: Marxists themselves have been turning to Hegelian dialectics for some time and yet many still seem to be involved in particularly undialectical and one-sided readings of the Marxian corpus. We are still engaged in arguments that treat Marx as a one-sided thinker. In short, as far as I can see, many who have already interpreted Marxian dialectics with the aid of the Hegelian system have yet to fully grasp Marx. Therefore, the work that has been accomplished via Hegel, and there has been a great deal of it, has yet to lead us fully to Marx.¹⁶ This may mean one of two things. Either Hegel's material is itself inadequate to this task, or the use to which it has been put by Marxists has been less than completely effective. Regardless of which of these may be the case, on a pragmatic level, this work has colored

Marxists' historical understanding of the Hegelian dialectic and, therefore, I would maintain that we are simply better off, in a purely practical sense, to begin anew. When it comes to language and meaning, philosophers need to be particularly sensitive and careful. Precision of expression is of the utmost importance if subtle nuances are to be adequately communicated. If Wittgenstein is correct and the meaning of words lies in their use, then the very words of Hegel's system are already loaded with meanings that have yet to capture adequately the thrust of Marxian dialectics.¹⁷ Whitehead's metaphysics will present us with new language (and far too much of it for most people's taste): language of feeling and relation, language of mutual constitution and creativity, language of organicism and materialism, language as appropriate to the discussion of productive power as it is to the discussion of exploitation. And, because relatively little work has been done on political-economic theory and Whiteheadian metaphysics, the language is, in this regard, "use-less" and rich with developmental possibilities. In other words, meanings are not yet attached in this particular use. This language can, therefore, be more easily infused with novel signification that will certainly facilitate my attempt to coax from it new ways of listening to and speaking of Marx but that will also give room for interpretive development by the reader. I have absolutely no desire to have this work be a final word regarding Marxism. That would be entirely dishonest for a dialectician. Rather, it is my deepest hope that this will constitute the first words in an ongoing dialogue.

With that said, however, another advantage of this project suggests itself. If there have been inadequacies in the readings of Hegel that have come from within (or without) the Marxist camp, then the following pages may have the unforeseen benefit of serving as a corrective or at least a helpful addendum to the secondary literature on Hegel. I can indicate briefly how this benefit may arise.

Certainly the feature of Hegel's philosophy most often maligned is the statement of its own finality as regards the philosophical/historical project. Some say that, according to Hegel, we have reached the moment where there has occurred an identity between the Notion and Existence. Knower and known have achieved unity in Absolute Spirit. In its most immoderate eschatological articulation, this identity means that the project of Absolute Spirit is completed. But, because Absolute Spirit's self-development is history, this identity indicates the end of history. Additionally, because philosophy can only reflect on history accomplished, this identity indicates the end of philosophy as well. According to this reading of Hegel, the circle has been closed. We stand at the stillpoint.

Critics of this view have pointed out that there are numerous signs that this identity has not, in fact, been achieved. Marcuse, for example, argues that

the division within capitalism of intellectual from physical labor indicates that the conceptual and material are still separated in practice. Moreover, he claims that we have not reached, on the political level, the consciousness proper to true freedom because the individual and general wills remain divided. Hegel is forced, says Marcuse, to support an authoritarian state that will act as final mediator/authority when conflicts arise.¹⁸ But finally, I think that it is the present condition of human life itself that speaks most forcefully against Hegel's claims of finality. The lived reality of exploitation and starvation, suffering and inequality, the fact of child labor, industrial slavery, disease, and famine for so many millions, can only mean that the real is not yet rational—the rational, even if known, is certainly not yet actualized.

Thus, if Hegel is indeed claiming that we have reached the end of history and philosophy through the achieved identity of the Notion and Existence, if he is claiming that the revolutionary ideals of human freedom have been actualized in social-political practice, if he is claiming that his is the final word on the workings of history, then we must say that Hegel is incorrect. Even if he has overcome the distinction between notion and existence in thought it has not been achieved in practice.

[I]f philosophy sees the rose in the cross of the present, this can only be because it sees the cross, the pain which cries out for some kind of reconciliation. This means that philosophy not only apprehends “the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present” in “the show [*Schein*] of the temporal and transient,” but also the degree to which the substance remains transcendent and the eternal absent.¹⁹

“Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts.”²⁰ And, ironically, Hegel, who was himself so aware of context, would turn out to be a child of *his* own times, declaring on the one hand “contradiction to be the ‘definite fundamental basis of all activity and self-movement’”²¹ and yet proclaiming the contradiction to be overcome. If indeed this was true, then there could have been no movement to his own thought—his existence itself would be superfluous. As Kierkegaard pointed out, “Existence must be revoked in the eternal before the system can round itself out.”²² But it turns out that the irony runs even deeper. Hegel's own time is factually rife with contradiction and this is itself apprehended in the dialectic as the moment of opposition. Therefore, in order to be self-consistent in his reflection on what has been achieved, Hegel must declare his own thought to be occurring within a moment of opposition and, therefore, itself still contradictory. In either case, his claims to finality must overturn themselves. Therefore, his philosophical position needs to be seen as ideological and necessarily so but also, in that, revealing.

But here a more generous reading of Hegel's supposed eschatology emerges. When Hegel speaks repeatedly of the end constituting a return to and reconstitution of the beginning, perhaps we ought take him at his word and understand the end which he reached in thought (through his idealism) as the beginning of a new project of fully overcoming the distinction between materialism and idealism. Perhaps we might say that dialectical reason as *thought* is a child of its times that serves as a self-diagnosis of the social contradictions still actual. After all, would it not be the case that if the contradictions between notion and existence were indeed overcome already *in reality* (in practice) we would no longer need to articulate a unity in difference because the difference would *be* no more? As long as thought performs dialectically, as long as it still moves through the moment of opposition, even if only temporarily, it reads the disunion off of reality; and then, the owl of Minerva is indeed flying at dusk and thought is operating ideo-logically.²³ But in reading union in and, in fact, from out of the disunion which is exhibited as the actual, thought has moved beyond the actual, and has, in that, realized that it possesses the key to the prison of the actual contradiction. But then, everything changes.

Perhaps self-knowledge of the notion is the actual freedom of thought — consciousness recognizing itself as freedom. In the achievement of dialectical thinking, thought presents itself to itself as free of the contradictions still present as actual. But in so doing, it knows itself as dialectical and is, through this knowledge, freed from the fetters of mere reflection. In achieving dialectical reason, thought need no longer be satisfied with description, it now can, nay must, in and through its achieved freedom, fly before and usher in day-break. Thought thinking itself is freed from the dictates of the actual: dialectical reason must prescribe. Thus, when dialectical reason looks back on the conditions that deny the rationality of the real, it is the role of reason to truly “seize the day,” and issue forth as a praxical guide.

[N]ow we see that knowledge is always beyond itself, that it can never be complete in itself inasmuch as social praxis is the condition of its possibility. What then can it mean for knowledge no longer to need to go beyond itself? . . . Knowledge corresponds to its concept by being embedded in social praxis.²⁴

[O]nly a social praxis which no longer needs to go beyond itself could ground a knowing which could legitimately rest at its goal.²⁵

So what now is the role of philosophy? It must become praxical. There are two prongs to this role. As long as thought is dialectical it reveals the actuality of contradiction. Therefore, it recognizes (in and as its own being)

that subject and substance are yet to *be* united and in this very recognition, the role of philosophical thought is defined. It must leap ahead and lead the creation of the actuality of unification. But precisely because the actuality is yet to be achieved, such thought must necessarily take the form of flying ahead; it must be speculative. Speculative philosophy must articulate the metaphysical-ontological unity of subject and object, conceptual and material, notion and reality. The sublation of Hegel's passive reflective philosophical idealism is a praxical (pragmatic), speculative metaphysics of dialectical being. "Thought must discover its own necessity in its material object."²⁶ As will emerge in the second chapter, this is an adequate description of the speculative offering of process metaphysics.

But this is only half the story. Once such a speculative unity of being is articulated it must serve first as a critic of the disunity of actuality and then as a lure to the praxical realization of such unity.²⁷ Late in his career, Sartre saw this necessity clearly.

We are dealing with a *materialist dialectic*; and by this I mean—from a strictly epistemological point of view—that thought must discover its own necessity in its material object, at the same time as discovering in itself, *in so far as it is itself a material being*, the necessity of its object. . . . This inevitably refers us from thought to action. Indeed, the former is only a moment of the latter.²⁸

And so, Whitehead will lay out the metaphysics as "speculative" indicating precisely its idealistic source and its practical role. It cannot be other than speculative and yet it can simultaneously constitute the "best" account both in terms of adequacy of explanation and in terms of pragmatic-ethical recommendation. It will articulate the rational yet to come in the real as actual. His position constitutes both a speculative account of and a recommendation for ontological-metaphysical solidarity.²⁹ Once the unity of subject and object have been achieved in thought, then thought must turn back on itself and carry the weight of responsibility for its sublation by unifying in praxis with its object.

And so, with regard to Hegel, what is presented here does not so much constitute a negation of or even a correction of his philosophical achievement, as it constitutes a fulfillment of the promise of the dialectical method. The question, "Why not Hegel?" contains an error. My intent is not to reject the Hegelian dialectics but to explore what I believe is the adequate extension of that very project. This was the extension that Marx himself needed to perform to ground the unity of humanism and critical economic analysis. This is the extension required to link in actuality the systemic and lifeworld analyses. The dialectic of ideality and materiality is praxical movement.

“Dialectic as a movement of reality collapses if time is not dialectic.”³⁰ In recognizing dialectics as a diagnosis of social contradiction and an acknowledgment of the role of thought in reference to such contradiction, thought comes full circle; it returns from its idealistic flight to apply itself to praxical (temporal-material) being. In this several favorable achievements emerge.

We are able to return from the macrocosmic metaphysics of the Absolute Spirit to a concrete microcosmic metaphysics of actual entity and thereby to recover the ground in between—the ontological as the apparent level of human (social) practice. “The effort to uncover a concept that truly identifies the thing for what it is plunges the mind into an infinite sea of relations. . . . The relations . . . must be seen as created by the object’s own movement.”³¹ Thought, in its self-knowledge, looking at the actual through the prism of the Absolute now sees itself shattered into the glinting fragments that are every possible manifestation of being. “[T]he Idea *freely releases* itself in its absolute self-assurance and inner poise. By reason of this freedom, the form of its determinateness is also utterly free—the *externality of space and time* existing absolutely on its own account without the moment of subjectivity.”³² The realization that dialectical thinking signals the lack of completion of its own project, frees us from any position that would assimilate the moving life of the individual subject to an abstract or totalizing objectivity or a mere particular instantiation. As Kierkegaard points out, subjective life (faith) is indefinable and cannot be made the object of knowledge. But does this necessarily mean that there is no totality? On a Whiteheadian metaphysics, each individual itself is its own achieved totality but because such totality is achieved as the unique relation to all being, the subject is a totality within totalities—totalized totality. Likewise, each individual determines itself as a part of its relational totality to all other being. Each subject is absolutely singular and absolutely universal in its very singularity. In this act of return, we regain (retrieve) the ineffability of each individual subject. All being reflects itself as a self-determined aspect of the dialectical totality. Not determinations of the absolute, but absolute self-determinations. “If we refuse to see the original dialectical movement in the individual and in his enterprise of producing his life, of objectifying himself, then we shall have to give up dialectic or else make of it the immanent law of History.”³³ “[T]he dialectic, if it exists, is the individual career of its object.”³⁴ All being, top to bottom, simultaneously subject and substance, simultaneously conceptual and material. All being relational. All being life and movement. All being free.

We see that the restoration of the subject as a self-determined freedom and movement makes praxical relation the category of prominence. Relationality is historicity. The unity in difference of the ideal and real, subject and substance, freedom and necessity is praxis. The idealism sees itself *as*

idealism—as an aspect of the whole. The unity of subject and substance is not spirit, it is dialectically relational being, it is praxis: the subjective and free mediation that moves objectivity to objectivity. Thus, returning to one of our original points, if self-knowledge of the notion involves the recognition of the lack of achievement of dialectical unity, then thought recognizes in this its own freedom. It is beyond the actual, yet responsible for it. The achievement is creativity become self-conscious. Not a creativity that escapes materiality through ideality but one that knows itself to be the movement of reality and now sees the task of a philosophy that has just begun. The end that constitutes the beginning and real unity of ideal and real is praxis. Again Sartre captures this point well.

This inevitably refers us from thought to action. Indeed, the former is only a moment of the latter. We must therefore inquire whether, in the unity of an apodictic experience, every praxis is constituted, in and through the material universe, as the transcendence of its object-being (*être-objet*) by the Other, while revealing the *praxis* of the Other as an object. But, at the same time, a relation must be established, by and through the Other, between each *praxis* and the universe of things, in such a way that, in the course of a perpetual totalisation, the thing becomes human and man realises himself as a thing.³⁵

The move from Hegel to Marx is not a movement from idealism to materialism, but a movement from idealism to dialectical (historical) materialism—itsself a sublation that moves us from thought to constitutive action. The important move that Hegel has made is not the end of philosophy or the end of history but is, in fact, exactly the opposite, the beginning of the possibility of human history as genuine self-appropriation and self-conscious historical being. Thinking change, thinking the movement of spirit, is the beginning of thinking being as self-creative. The efficacy of the subject is realized. The actual practice of such thought is the end of that epoch of philosophical thought and the beginning of philosophy anew. The achievement of Hegel is the achievement of freedom. Not freedom from, but freedom for what is yet to be achieved.³⁶

And so, finally, the importance of Hegel's idealism lies not in what it accomplishes for once and for all, but in what it dialectically reveals in its claim to actualization—its own lack of actualization. But in this it reveals also its own limits as idealism. It turns over to become the beginning of a task. And, strange as this may sound, this overturning of Hegel is perfectly consistent with Hegel. "As soon as the ideologist speaks, he says more and something different from what he wants to say; the period steals his thought from him."³⁷ But Hegel, of all philosophers, would be well aware that this theft would necessarily happen. When the period steals his thought, when his thought reveals itself as other,

what is seen is the possibility of the unity of being through praxis. Speculative metaphysics posits that being is unified through its self-constitution as relation. And this is dialectical being (being dialectical). What needs to be accomplished now is the realization of such unity. The first step to such realization is the diagnosis of and analysis of the modes of relational being in which such unity is not-yet, therefore, an analysis of the praxical form of our contradictory social relations: a critique of capitalism.

For Hegel, freedom in thought apart from the movement of existence is not real freedom.³⁸ The end is a beginning. The finality of Hegel's project is the beginning of the movement of existence itself toward freedom. "Before it can be a *motive force*, contradiction is a result; and, on the level of ontology, the dialectic appears as the only type of relation which individuals, situated and constituted in a certain way, and on account of their very constitution, can establish amongst themselves."³⁹ We need to explicate and develop the result (the dialectical metaphysics) and make of it a motive force (critique). The first task is the subject of the first two parts of this work. Part I is speculative and explicates the dialectical metaphysics as process/production. Part II is practical and develops the ontological ramifications of this metaphysics. The second task is the subject of Part III wherein constructive critique emerges as the content of the metaphysical and ontological analyses.

We live in desperate times. So many feel so utterly empty. So many live in want. The more we want the more our very wanting reveals how little we truly have. A dialectical image is set to explode in the human heart—revolutionary promises have not been kept and the great humanistic ideologies and the great emancipatory discourses still hang unfulfilled and empty, beckoning.⁴⁰ We want so desperately to believe.⁴¹ We want so desperately to be free and fulfilled as members of a common humanity. We want the freedom of others but are told that theirs is the price of our own. We no longer believe. We want truth. We want ourselves. Marx calls suffering a sense of self in the human person—suffering loss, feeling unrealized potential, mourning what might have been. If human consciousness is indeed freedom, then perhaps this is genuine Sartrean scarcity—this lack of freedom, this lack of self.

This finally is the primary motivation for this project. If we construct ourselves through our mode of social relatedness, then we cannot see ourselves or see our way to ourselves until we understand the construction that we are—our mediation as our being. We need to understand the want that pervades that being and know how it opens before us, in us, the chasm that is a path for those of us who will be lucky enough in these desperate times to live to take it.

Far from being exhausted, Marxism is still very young, almost in its infancy; it has scarcely begun to develop. It remains, therefore, the philosophy of our time. We cannot go beyond it because we have not gone beyond the circumstances which engendered it.⁴²

We have not gone beyond exploitation; we have not gone beyond hunger and starvation; we have not gone beyond crippling poverty and homelessness; we have not gone beyond incarceration and the death penalty; we have not gone beyond the inhumanity so often evident in our social relations. We will not be done with Marx until we are done with capitalism and so, I offer another page in the ongoing dialogue, another way of looking and of seeing and of speaking. What follows constitutes ground-clearing and preparation for the ongoing project of addressing our condition of alienation. “[I]t is not enough to describe the working of capital or the system of colonization. It is necessary that the questioner understand how the questioned—that is, himself—exists *his alienation*, how he surpasses it and is alienated in this very surpassing.”⁴³ I hope to offer tools for such understanding.