

M.N. Roy Memorial Lecture : 11

Marxism, Pluralism and Orthodoxy

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FOREWORD

The birthday of the late M.N. Roy, which falls on March 21, is celebrated each year by the Indian Renaissance Institute and the Indian Radical Humanist Association by arranging a lecture by an eminent authority on a topic of public importance. In celebration of the 95th birth anniversary this year, the Roy Memorial Address will be delivered at New Delhi on 22nd March 1982 by Dr. Andr  B teille, Professor of Sociology, University of Delhi. The full text of the address is published in this pamphlet.

The object of this lecture series is not to give a resumé of the ideas of M.N. Roy, but to present new thinking on a critical topic. This, I believe, is an appropriate mode of perpetuating the memory of a revolutionary philosopher who was always opposed to ideological orthodoxy, who became alienated from communism because of its spirit of blind conformism, and who would have liked his own ideas to be critically appreciated but never sanctified.

I am very grateful to Dr. Andr  B teille for having agreed to deliver this year's address. He speaks on a topic of great interest and I am sure that the reader will have ample reason to share my sense of gratefulness to him.

—V.M. TARKUNDE

Marxism, Pluralism and Orthodoxy

André Bêteille

*"If we get a few more of these professors spinning
out their theories, we shall be lost."*

*ZINOVIEV at the Fifth World
Congress of the Comintern.*

IN the second half of the twentieth century it is no longer possible to speak of Marxism in the singular; one has to speak of it in the plural. This is true in an obvious sense of Marxist practice, but it is true also of Marxist theory which is my present concern. It will be hard to identify any single approach to the understanding of either man or society—or history, or culture, or nature—that will be accepted as authoritative by all Marxists today. It is said that what is distinctive of the Marxist approach is that it is dialectical. But to describe an approach to society as "dialectical" is a little like describing it as "scientific"; Marxists are no more agreed on what they understand by the dialectic than are social scientists on what they understand by science. Marxism has come to signify various things to various people, not only among its adversaries but also among its protagonists. Maxime Rodinson, the renowned Islamic scholar and for many years a member of the French Communist Party, has put it thus: "For me there is not just *one* Marxism, but *several* Marxisms, all with a common core, it is true, but also with many divergences, each version as legitimate as any other."¹

Marxism has grown in depth and variety, not only with the passage of time but also by its diffusion across the different parts of the world. Marx's own thought was deeply rooted in the intellectual culture of mid-nineteenth century Europe. His

concern was primarily with the problems of European society, to the solution of which he applied concepts and categories derived from the resources of European science and European philosophy. In the hundred years since he died, Marx's ideas have found new homes with very different intellectual traditions and requirements. This acclimatization has called for a continuous process of adaptation, innovation and reinterpretation.

The variety of forms taken by Marxism may be seen as a sign of its vitality and its capacity for growth. It is a central part of the Marxist doctrine that life and thought do not remain the same everywhere or for ever, and that changes in the material conditions of life demand changes in the forms of thought. It would be difficult to exaggerate the changes that have taken place in the conditions of life since the time of Marx. Some of them have resulted from ideas implanted by Marx himself and it is not surprising that these changes, by altering the context of his ideas, have given them a new significance.

The divergences in Marxism relate not merely to matters of detail or to points of application, but reach into fundamental questions of theory and method. In other words, not only are there different conceptions of "mode of production" and "social formation", or of the relationship between thought and action (or existence and consciousness, or technology and social structure); but these different, or even rival, conceptions are all advocated forcefully and persuasively, in the name of Marxism.

The interpretation of authoritative texts is an important part of all scholarly disciplines, certainly those concerned with the human sciences. In the absence of some reliance on the authority of texts, intellectual discourse would lose all continuity with the past. Among Marxists intellectual discourse has centred to an unusual degree on the correct interpretation of authoritative texts. Marx occupies a unique position among modern thinkers in the volume and range of interpretations which have taken his ideas as their subject. Marxists, anti-Marxists and ex-Marxists have contended for a hundred years over the true import of his words, and the question of what Marx really meant has been reopened again and again by philosophers, historians, economists, sociologists and others. A well-known contemporary critic has used the phrase "equivocal and inexhaustible" to characterise his work.²

The stupendous volume of interpretative literature has perhaps made the thought of Marx appear more equivocal and inexhaustible than it might by itself be. It has tended to act as a screen between the ordinary reader and what Marx himself wrote, obscuring and confusing even those passages and texts that are simple and easy to read. It is a sign of the greatness of Marx that more people learn his thoughts by what they hear than by what they read, and even among the highly educated, people can passionately attack and defend these thoughts without being acquainted with them at first hand.

It is not as if the understanding and interpretation of Marx's work present no genuine problems. While these problems should not be given too much importance, they cannot be ignored. Marx was both a scholar, trained to the requirements of scholarly discipline and an activist alive to the advantages of quick, not to say instantaneous, response to important political events. He wrote a great deal on a large number of subjects. He also read a great deal and kept himself remarkably well informed on the events of the day. He reacted at once to concrete events and abstract ideas. He adopted more than one style of writing, just as he wrote for more than one kind of audience. In the event, his work does not have the kind of perfect unity which the uninformed too readily assume to be the hallmark of every great mind.

Although Marx wrote a great deal, much of this remained unpublished in his own lifetime. It is doubtful that all of what he left unpublished was intended to be published, although some clearly was. Many of Marx's unpublished writings began to appear in print from 1932 onwards, first in the original and then in various translations. The publication of these manuscripts—in particular the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and the *Grundrisse*—became major events in the intellectual history of Marxism. Some felt that they rendered obsolete much of the interpretation of Marx's thought till then considered authoritative. Others maintained that since they were in the main notes, drafts and sketches which Marx chose to leave unpublished, they did not have the same authority as what he himself published in his own lifetime.

Within Marx's varied intellectual output a unique position is occupied by *Capital*. In a sense his entire intellectual life after 1844 centred around the writing of this work, and the study and

preparation required for its writing. Only the first of the three volumes of the work we know today as *Capital* was published by Marx in his own lifetime and, although he lived for more than fifteen years after its publication, he did not publish any further volumes. Volumes 2 and 3 were put together by Engels, from drafts and notes left behind by Marx, and published after his death. Not surprisingly, Engels was criticised at once—by some for editing the work too little and by others for editing it too much.³

The three volumes of *Capital* taken together constitute a monument of intellectual endeavour on a scale rarely attained in history. Nevertheless, the work abounds in gaps, repetitions and obscurities,⁴ and one of the greatest economists of the present century was provoked into describing it as “an obsolete economic textbook”.⁵ Whatever may be the final verdict on Marx’s theory and method, it is evident that he had rather less certitude about them than many of his followers would like him to have had.⁶ Had he arrived at a position which in his own considered judgement appeared as definitive, he would hardly have left his notes and papers in the state in which he did after nearly forty years of concentrated reflection and research. The plain fact is that Marx hesitated between alternative formulations, not merely on points of detail but on fundamental matters, as will be evident from a comparison of the unpublished draft later published as *Grundrisse* and Volume 1 of *Capital*.

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Throughout the nineteenth century and until the First War Marxism had its intellectual home in Western Europe, particularly in Germany, France and England.⁷ These are the countries in which Marx and Engels lived, and about which they primarily wrote. Although as a body of living ideas Marxism has continued to flourish more actively, more vigorously and more luxuriantly in Western Europe than elsewhere, the success of the Revolution of 1917 deprived West European Marxism of the unique intellectual authority it had till then enjoyed throughout the world. Ironically, some of the most brilliant Marxists in Western Europe themselves contributed to the devaluation of their own intellectual capital by submitting to the intellectual authority of Soviet Marxism.⁷

The triumph of Soviet Marxism owed a great deal to state power

but it also owed something to the appeal of strong ideas directly and forcefully expressed. Much of what was presented as Marxism in the Soviet Union at the height of Stalin's authority is today derided by the more acute and subtle interpreters of Marxism in the West and their followers elsewhere.⁹ For all that, Soviet Marxism had in its day a real intellectual appeal for millions of people whose main, if not sole, exposure to Marxism was through the works of Lenin and Stalin.¹⁰ It will be a mistake to think that that appeal has disappeared for ever or can never be quickened to new life again.

The outstanding feature of Soviet Marxism, in contrast with Occidental Marxism, is its unity and continuity as an intellectual system. A great deal of this has been due to the discipline of party and state, but it would be a mistake to ignore what it owes to the Russian intellectual tradition. The kind of materialist doctrine that became established as the official form of Marxism under Stalin in fact enjoyed great influence among Russian Marxists long before the Bolshevik Revolution. Soviet Marxism grew within a particular material and intellectual environment; and, while it is true that the Bolshevik Revolution changed much of the material culture of the old Russia, it is doubtful that it changed as much of the basic categories of its intellectual culture.¹¹ At any rate, one is struck by the uniformity of the categories used in social analysis from Plekhanov down to the most recent Soviet text-books of sociology.

Soviet Marxism is characterised by a number of interrelated features. There is first of all, the adherence to materialism in its various forms: materialist philosophy, dialectical materialism, the materialist interpretation of history. Then there is the preoccupation with the scientific laws of social dynamics, including the preoccupation with causality and determinism as understood in the natural sciences. Finally, there is the characteristic analytical scheme dividing society into "base" and "superstructure", and assigning causal priority to the former over the latter. In all these regards Soviet Marxism has remained much closer to the spirit of the Second International, with its view of Marxism as the doctrine of "scientific socialism", than many contemporary forms of Occidental Marxism.¹²

Was Marx himself a materialist? Is it possible to reject materialism—not just "mechanical" materialism but materialism

as such—and still remain a Marxist? Contemporary Western Marxists are by no means in complete agreement on these questions. At any rate, Marx's own writings do not give evidence of the kind of intransigent materialism that has been attributed to him by some of his most authoritative interpreters.

In an essay published shortly after the October Revolution, Bertrand Russell drew attention to the tremendous emphasis on materialism in Bolshevik theory, after pointing to the lack of any necessary connection between "philosophical materialism" and the "materialistic conception of history".¹³ The foundations of Russian Marxism were laid by Plekhanov whose theoretical works remained influential despite his later differences with Lenin. Pre- and post-Revolutionary Russian Marxists, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, Stalinists and Trotskyists were all influenced by Plekhanov's philosophical writings about which Lenin said that nothing better had been written on Marxism anywhere in the world.

Plekhanov's influential point of view is set out in a work published in 1895 under the title of *The Development of the Monist-View of History*. It had originally been entitled *In Defence of Materialism*, but that title had to be changed in order to evade censorship. The book sets out to establish the superiority, firstly, of materialism over all other philosophical systems; and, secondly, of dialectical materialism over all other forms of materialism. It is an attack not only on idealism but also on all forms of dualism which refuse to acknowledge the logical and historical priority of matter over mind. The book is written in a didactic style intended to settle once and for all the basic questions of theory and method.

Marxism was represented as materialism of an even more uncompromising kind in a work published fourteen years later by Lenin under the title of *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. The importance of this work for the development of Soviet Marxism can hardly be overstated. In it Lenin pressed the case for partisanship in philosophy and social theory. There were two opposed camps in philosophy—materialism and idealism—between which one had to choose since there was no middle ground. Those who vacillated between the two in the name of "empirio-criticism", or "empiriomonism", or plain agnosticism were in fact idealists in disguise who needed to be exposed. In Lenin's words, "Marx and Engels were partisans in philosophy

from start to finish, they were able to detect the deviations from materialism and concessions to idealism and fideism in every one of the 'recent' trends".¹⁴

It is now a commonplace among European Marxists that Marx was by no means a partisan for philosophical materialism. Some writers have sought to attribute to Engels the elements of materialism that might have crept into the writings of Marx, inadvertently as it were.¹⁵ These are not new arguments. Lenin was perfectly familiar with them, and his work was in fact directed against those who sought to deny that Marx was a partisan for materialism and to suggest that there might be a basic difference of outlook between Engels and Marx.¹⁶ Differences between Marx and Engels there no doubt were, but it would be strange indeed if Engels had so completely misunderstood Marx on such a fundamental point as some of the anti-materialist adherents of Marxism appear to suggest.¹⁷

Commitment to materialism meant for Plekhanov, Lenin and others assigning clear priority to the external order of nature over the internal order of spirit, mind or consciousness. These thinkers saw the social world as an external world, made up of definite relations between men that were indispensable and independent of their will.¹⁸ This external order of society was, in their view, like the external order of nature, governed by immutable laws which could be discovered and formulated, if not with the same exactitude, at least with something of the exactitude of the laws of nature. Marxism provided a method for the discovery and formulation of these laws which far surpassed in range and power the methods of bourgeois political economy and bourgeois sociology.

The case for causality and determinism was made forcefully by Bukharin in a popular manual entitled *Historical Materialism*. "Society and its evolution are as much subject to natural law as is everything else in the universe", wrote Bukharin;¹⁹ and, again, "The only correct point of view is that of determinism".²⁰ Bukharin's popular manual was attacked by more sophisticated Marxists,²¹ partly because his formulations were crude and oversimple; but also because Bukharin became an easy target after his estrangement with Stalin. Bukharin's formulations were indeed oversimple; but, then, it was only by virtue of being presented in

the form of simple aphorisms that Marxism could take a hold over the minds of millions of ordinary people.

Once again, the ideal of a natural science of society, with its presuppositions regarding causality and determinism were more consistently articulated by Engels than by Marx, but it would be disingenuous to pretend that Marx never found the idea appealing or that he ever renounced it clearly and categorically.²² The idea that Marxism provides the correct scientific explanation of social reality appealed greatly to the best minds of the Second International.²³ It became codified in the Soviet Union and, under the name of "diazmat", it has provided the groundwork for the education of millions of students there and in other socialist countries. It is difficult to see what Marxism would be in the countries of the Third World without the belief in the efficacy of its scientific laws.

The scientific understanding of society requires, according to many Marxists of the present as well as the past, giving priority to the laws of economics. As Plekhanov put it, "*The psychology of society is always expedient in relation to its economy, always corresponds to it, is always determined by it*".²⁴ The distinction between "economics" and "psychology", needless to say, expresses the distinction between base and superstructure (or between social existence and social consciousness), regarded by many, if not most, people as the hallmark of Marxism considered as a scientific doctrine.

Here again, it was Lenin who formulated the distinction most clearly and reacted most sharply to attempts at obliterating it. To put it in his words, "Social consciousness *reflects* social being—that is Marx's teaching. A reflection may be an approximately true copy of the reflected, but to speak of identity is absurd. Consciousness in general reflects being—that is a general thesis of *all* materialism. It is impossible not to see its direct and *inseparable* connection with the thesis of historical materialism: social consciousness *reflects* social being".²⁵ It is possible that Lenin was beguiled by his reading of Engels into misrepresenting Marx. But we still need to explain why so many intelligent interpreters of Marx, many of whom give clear evidence of having read his work, should misrepresent him in exactly the same way.

Marxists have in recent years found it increasingly difficult

to apply consistently the distinction between base and superstructure in their analyses of society and history. The recognition of the problem has been followed by various responses. There are those Marxists, like the British historian E.P. Thompson, who would frankly admit that the distinction, once considered useful, no longer appears to be so, and may now be set aside in the interest of a further advance of knowledge.²⁶ Another kind of response is that of contemporary Soviet sociologists who retain the distinction between "base" and "superstructure", but introduce a third category of "extra-superstructural" factors to accommodate items that do not clearly fall under either base or superstructure.²⁷

Not all adherents of Marxism—or for that matter, all followers of Lenin—have assigned the same fundamental significance to the distinction between base and superstructure. As against such a view is the one which characterises Marxism in terms of its emphasis on the totality. This was the emphasis of Georg Lukacs and those who developed what may be called a Hegelian as opposed to a positivist version of Marxism.²⁸ In such a version the relationship between social existence and social consciousness is a relationship between the whole and a part rather than that between two parts of which one is more important than the other.²⁹ It would be against the spirit of this approach to contrast "economics" and "psychology" with a view to asserting the primacy of the former over the latter.

Soviet Marxists have assigned fundamental importance to method, thereby meaning primarily the scientific method. There is also a great emphasis on method in the work of Lukacs—and, likewise, of Sartre³⁰—but the term "method" is here used in a different sense. For Lukacs method is, first and foremost, the dialectic, meaning the movement towards unity of subject and object. If it is true that men in society are governed by laws, it is also true that they themselves create these laws, and hence they can understand them best in the very act of their creation. As Marx asks, following Vico, "And would not such a history be easier to compile, since, as Vico says, human history differs from natural history in this, that we have made the former but not the latter?"³¹

Lukacs's path-breaking work, *History and Class Consciousness* is not an attempt to subordinate consciousness to material forces.

It is, if anything, a celebration of human consciousness as an active agent in the making of human history. As is well known, Lenin, who otherwise praised Bukharin, had remarked that Bukharin did not understand the dialectic. The dialectic as understood by Lukacs (or Sartre, or Merleau-Ponty) is, in turn, very different from the sense given to it by Lenin or by Engels.³³ For Lukacs there is no such thing as a dialectic of nature; the dialectic has a place only within human history which is more than merely a continuation of natural history.

Thus, method for Lukacs means, above all, the dialectic whose concern must be with the whole. As he puts it, "... dialectics insists on the concrete unity of the whole"³⁴; or, again, "Concrete totality is, therefore, the category that governs reality."³⁵ Method in Marxism, according to Lukacs (or Sartre), calls for the unity of theory and practice rather than any particular technique of observation or fact finding. The attempt to transform Marxism into scientific sociology is doomed to failure. Marxism grows with the growth of the revolutionary consciousness, towards which bourgeois social science takes a negative, if not hostile, stance.

History and Class Consciousness was directed against the Marxism of the Second International in which theory was claiming a life independent of practice. In the very year of its publication, another work, entitled *Marxism and Philosophy*, was published by the German Marxist, Karl Korsch, also from an anti-positivist point of view. Korsch argued strongly against the kind of dualism that sought to drive a wedge between social existence and social consciousness: "For the coincidence of consciousness and reality characterizes every dialectic, including Marx's dialectical materialism."³⁶ Korsch's work like that of Lukacs was denounced by Soviet Marxists. In an "Anti-critique" published in 1930, Korsch traced back the roots of the dualism he had earlier attacked to what he considered to be Lenin's misrepresentation of Marx in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*.³⁷

The preoccupation of Lukacs with human consciousness as an active agent in social transformation makes his theory and method very different from theories and methods which rest on ideas of external causality and determinism. Not surprisingly, Lukacs was attacked by the theoreticians of the Comintern

for propagating "voluntarism", a charge which Lukacs, again not surprisingly, repudiated. Whatever be the merits of these charges and countercharges, it is difficult, when comparing Bukharin and Lukacs—who criticised each other—not to be struck by their very different conceptions of the dialectic and of the laws which govern human conduct. The tension between determinism and voluntarism has become even more marked in the discussion of Marxism that has grown in Western Europe in the last twenty-five years.

Among Marxists who have attacked determinism and asserted the primacy of the human will, none has enjoyed greater respect, at least since the time of Lenin, than Gramsci. Gramsci owes his unique place in contemporary Marxism as much to his highly original presentation of it as to the conditions under which he lived and wrote.³⁷ Like Lukacs, Gramsci also wrote a long critique of Bukharin's *Historical Materialism*, and this critique is important because it brings out the difference between his approach and the approach not only of Bukharin but of what became established as Soviet Marxism.

In the course of his critique of Bukharin, Gramsci wrote,

It is well known, moreover, that the originator of the philosophy of praxis [Marx] never called his own conception materialist and that when writing about French materialism he criticises it and affirms that the critique ought to be more exhaustive. Thus he never uses the formula "materialist dialectic," but calls it "rational" as opposed to "mystical", which gives the term "rational" a quite precise meaning.³⁸

Whether true or false, this view of Marxism is strikingly, if not startlingly, different from the text-book representation of it as being first and foremost a form of materialism.³⁹ Needless to say, it has implications for a critique of not only Bukharin's *Historical Materialism*, but also Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*.⁴⁰

If we follow Gramsci, materialism is a metaphysic which obstructs historical understanding which is the only form of understanding appropriate to a subject concerned with human beings. Gramsci's approach to Marxism is a historicist approach consciously opposed to every form of positivism. The subject

matter of history being radically different from the subject matter of the natural sciences, their methods must also be different.

Gramsci's historicism has appealed to many Marxists in the West, but by no means to all. A highly influential version of Marxism emerged in the sixties of the present century under the leadership of the French structuralist, Louis Althusser. Althusser's structuralist interpretation of Marx sought to put back the emphasis on "laws", "determinants" and "structures", as against a humanistic and historicist interpretation, on the basis of a sharp distinction between the earlier and the later work of Marx. In this version, the later, more mature and scientific work of Marx as exemplified in *Capital* should be seen as superseding his earlier work which, upto the period of *The German Ideology*, was permeated by "humanistic" and "historicist" categories.⁴¹

It will be clear from what has been said above, that Marxism, as theory and method, has retained much greater unity and continuity in the Soviet Union than outside it. In Western Europe several different versions of Marxism have succeeded each other, particularly in the last twenty-five years, and differences arising from national intellectual traditions, as between German and French Marxism or between French and English Marxism, are also discernible⁴². The co-existence of these various interpretations of Marxism—in some ways complementary and in others difficult to reconcile—enables Marxism to retain and perhaps extend its appeal among all those who have a real interest in the understanding of society and history.

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The plurality of approaches within Marxism must be seen in the light of what has been and continues to be another important, if not intrinsic, feature of it, namely, the preoccupation of Marxists with orthodoxy. By this I simply mean that Marxists are concerned not only with the correct understanding of the world, but, over and above that, and to an unusual degree, with the correct interpretation of a particular body of writings. Thus, debates among Marxists, and between Marxists and their adversaries move along two intersecting scales: on the one hand whether, for instance, base in fact determines superstructure or psychology merely reflects economics; on the other, what Marx really meant by the various observations he made on such subjects.

Orthodoxy, as orthodox Marxists are ready to point out, is not the same thing as dogmatism. Dogmatism indicates unwillingness to reconsider one's initial position in the light of new facts or facts not considered earlier. Marxism would not have survived as an intellectual system had it refused to respond to the momentous changes taking place in the real world. The recognition of changes that call for the replacement of old ideas by new has been a conspicuous feature of European Marxism. And as one eloquent advocate of orthodoxy has argued, one may renounce many, even most of the substantive propositions formulated by Marx without ceasing to be an orthodox Marxist⁴⁹.

The idea of orthodoxy, which has its widest use in the domain of religion, is difficult to define in the context of Marxism which is secular and scientific in its orientation. Not all Marxists make a case for orthodoxy, explicitly and systematically, but the striking thing is that so many do. The orthodoxy of Kautsky, once widely acknowledged, was later repudiated by Lenin. Lukács sought to give a new meaning to the idea of orthodoxy so as to harmonize it with Lenin's practice, but his formulation was condemned by Lenin's heirs in Moscow.

Not only are various forms of orthodoxy opposed to each other but orthodoxy as such is opposed to revisionism. The term "revisionist" is difficult to define since it may be used in a loose sense by the advocates of one kind of orthodoxy to denounce or revile the advocates of another. But revisionists in the strict sense make no pretence at orthodoxy. They are those who call for a serious reexamination of the tenets of Marxism, including some of its fundamental tenets, while seeking to remain within the Marxist tradition.

The attack on the revisionism of Bernstein by Kautsky and the custodians of orthodoxy brought to light a fundamental contradiction in the Marxism of the Second International. For Marxism, as it was presented by the theoreticians of the Second International, was a positive science: it was the scientific aspect of Marxism that they most strongly recommended. Why should it be inherently wrong, as the orthodox seemed to say it was, to revise a body of knowledge that claimed to be a positive science? Marxist ideas of orthodoxy and revisionism are difficult to accommodate within the domain of positive science which

regards the capacity for revision as a virtue and the claim of orthodoxy a defect.

The superior merit of Lukacs over Kautsky lay in this, that he did not seek to combine the claim of orthodoxy with the claim that Marxism was a positive science. For Lukacs (as also for Korsch and Gramsci), Marxism was not a positive science, not even a superior form of it, but stood in opposition to it. Orthodoxy in Marxism involved not a defence of but an attack on empiricism which, according to Lukacs, constituted the foundation of bourgeois social science. The obsession with facts as they are is a feature of the "contemplative" as opposed to the "dialectical" method which is the defining feature of Marxism.⁴⁴ Any attempt to revise Marxism in the name of facts as they are given "must lead to oversimplification, triviality and eclecticism".⁴⁵

Lukacs was the first to articulate in a systematic way a new view of orthodoxy in Marxism, centering not on scientific socialism but on revolutionary praxis. In "What is Orthodox Marxism?" and in the other essays published together as *History and Class Consciousness*, he presented his case with unsurpassed verve and sophistication. Lukacs's view of Marxism as revolutionary praxis rather than scientific socialism found its echo in the writings of a number of his contemporaries, notably Korsch and Gramsci.

The shift in orientation from scientific socialism to the philosophy of praxis was precipitated by the momentous events of the Bolshevik revolution. Gramsci hailed these events in a newspaper article entitled "The Revolution Against *Das Kapital*". Korsch called for a closer union between revolutionary theory and practice, and Lukacs presented his new vision of orthodox Marxism. All three were calling for a fuller appreciation from Occidental Marxists of the significance, not merely the *practical* significance (but also the *theoretical* significance) of the revolution made by Lenin and his associates.

History and Class Consciousness by Lukacs and *Marxism and Philosophy* by Korsch were both published in 1923. It seems to me that these two works (and the work of Gramsci) provide a far more powerful philosophical support for Lenin's practice than does Lenin's own philosophical treatise, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, published between the abortive revolution of 1905 and the successful one of 1917.⁴⁶ But Lenin's heirs in Moscow, those who had helped him to make the October

Revolution and were still fighting bitterly to save it, thought otherwise. At the historical Fifth World Congress of the Comintern in 1924, Zinoviev led the attack on Korsch and Lukacs, denouncing their work as "theoretical revisionism".⁴⁷

The question still remains as to why the Soviet leadership reacted so sharply against the attempt to establish a new orthodoxy that would vindicate the revolution that was its own creation. Part of the answer lies in what may be described as the inertia of intellectual categories. The intellectual categories of Lenin's heirs were those established as authoritative by Plekhanov, in which matter was prior to mind, and psychology expedient to economy; and the plain fact is that those who bring about a revolution in the real world do not necessarily bring one about in their own categories of thought. Without a fundamental change in those categories, the new proposals for orthodoxy were bound to appear as "idealistic" and "voluntaristic" and to be rejected as such.

Lukacs, Korsch and other "idealist deviationists" were not merely celebrating the Bolshevik revolution; they were presenting their arguments in a particular idiom that had its roots in Hegel's philosophy. Russian Marxism had absorbed very little of this idiom which might indeed appear as an encumbrance to those who saw the main intellectual task after the revolution to be that of codification. If, as Lukacs and Korsch were arguing, Marxism was the intellectual expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, it had to be brought within the intellectual reach of the working class. Soviet Marxists might, with some justice, say that it was they, and not professors like Lukacs and Korsch, who were in reality carrying Marxism to the workers.

Codification might make Marxism easy for the workers, but it generates its own orthodoxy. The speed with which Soviet Marxism under Stalin displaced all other claimants to orthodoxy might have something to do with its intellectual form and content, but cannot be explained solely by that. Questions of orthodoxy never are fully resolved on the merits of ideas; they are settled in the end by the struggle for power.

Marxism is unique among modern intellectual systems not only in its insistence on orthodoxy, but in its attempt to create theoretical grounds for giving the party a determining voice on questions of orthodoxy. It is not enough to point to the part

played by the Stalinist leadership in imposing a particular kind of orthodoxy through the use or threat of force; one must recognise also the legitimacy accorded to the party in the writings of Lukacs, Gramsci and others in deciding on questions of orthodoxy. Even if it is true that Stalin did not endorse the theories of Lukacs, or Gramsci the practices of Stalin, the two developments were taking place simultaneously in what appeared from the outside as broadly the same movement.

It is not unusual to view Marx as a social scientist, and to compare his intellectual system with the intellectual systems of other social scientists, e.g. Max Weber or Keynes. But neither of these generated orthodoxies at all comparable to the orthodoxies established in the name of Marx. In purely intellectual terms, the only possible comparison might be with the system created by Freud. But it was never a part of any Freudian orthodoxy to use a political party as the vehicle of its true expression. The practical and theoretical significance of the party in Marxism gives to Marxist orthodoxy a totally different character from all contemporary social science systems.

Those, like Gramsci and Lukacs, who, after the Bolshevik Revolution, sought to free Marxist theory from the strait-jacket of determinism imposed on it by the orthodoxy of the Second International, sought at the same time to give a central role to the party in the articulation of working-class consciousness. The party had some authority in deciding on questions of theory throughout the period of the Second International. But it was only after the Bolshevik Revolution that the essence of Marxism was linked to the revolutionary party with the aid of the most complex and ingenious theoretical reasoning.

Lukacs and Korsch attacked the orthodoxy of the Second International for representing Marxism as a positive science whose truth was independent of any political movement. In their view Marxism could have a valid existence only as "the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat", and never independently of it. For Lukacs, as we have seen, method is all-important, but method consists not in a set of procedures for collecting and analysing facts, but, above all, in adopting what he calls "the standpoint of the proletariat". It is this standpoint rather than any detached intellectual skill that is the guarantee of true insight. As Lukacs puts it, "the

knowledge yielded by the standpoint of the proletariat stands on a higher scientific plane objectively";⁴⁹ for only the proletariat is destined to become the "identical subject-object of history".⁵⁰

But what is the standpoint of the proletariat? And what is the class consciousness of the proletariat? Lukacs is keen to point out that he is talking not about "empirical" or "psychological" consciousness, but about "real" or "historical" or "imputed" consciousness:

Now class consciousness consists in fact of the appropriate and national reactions 'imputed' (zugerechnet) to a particular typical position in the process of production. This consciousness is, therefore, neither the sum nor the average of what is thought or felt by the single individuals who make up the class.⁵¹

And it is here that the role of the party becomes decisive, for "the party is the historical embodiment and the active incarnation of class consciousness";⁵² and, again, "the party is assigned the sublime role of *bearer of the class consciousness of the proletariat and the conscience of its historical vocation*".⁵³

Gramsci has been hailed as the exponent of a humanist form of Marxism, but it is to Gramsci that we owe the most persuasive attempt in theory at an apotheosis of the political party. *The Modern Prince* is one of the great works of social and political theory, and it is entirely free from the pyrotechnic characteristic of Lukacs's writing. Gramsci played a leading part in founding the Italian Communist Party, and his work derives its strength and appeal from its sincerity as much as its originality. When Gramsci spoke of working class consciousness he did not mean an imputed consciousness accessible to only a select few; the actual or empirical worker and his view of the world never ceased to engage his attention.

We have to remember that in Gramsci's perspective the purely organisational side of the party was subordinate to its cultural and intellectual life. The party was to be not merely an engine for the capture of power; it was to be above all a school for the creation of a new culture, a new outlook and a new way of life. Men could not leave it to history to change things in accordance with some preordained law of progress. The initiative

lay with them to create a new life for themselves in the pursuit of their own collective needs and aspirations.

Gramsci had a genuine belief in the efficacy of the human will and of human ideas, and sought to give to these a central place in his conception of Marxism. There could be no revolution in real life without a revolution in ideas, and the revolution in ideas would not come about as a mere byproduct or after-effect of the revolution in material conditions. In all this the intellectual function was of crucial importance, but the intellectual function could not be performed from above or outside; it had to become a constitutive part of the working-class movement.

Gramsci thought of a new kind of intellectual, organically linked with the working-class movement, and a new framework for his intellectual activity, namely, the political party. He wrote, "That all members of a political party should be regarded as intellectuals is an affirmation that can easily lend itself to mockery and caricature. But if one thinks about it, nothing could be more exact"⁵⁴. In Gramsci's view it was the party alone that could weld together the older "traditional" intellectuals with the new intellectuals whose growth was organically linked with the growth of the working class.

Without active intellectual engagement the party would degenerate into a lifeless machine. But if intellectual activity was necessary to the health and well-being of the party, the party was no less indispensable to the kind of intellectual life Gramsci considered appropriate to Marxism. One cannot emphasize too strongly the central place assigned to the party in Gramsci's philosophy of praxis. The party *is* the "modern Prince", the protagonist of revolutionary praxis in the modern world, and as such it has a historical mission of the highest importance: "In men's consciences, the Prince takes the place of the divinity or the categorical imperative, and becomes the basis for a modern laicism and for a complete laicisation of all aspects of life and of all customary relationships"⁵⁵. It would be a grave error to think that the supreme role assigned to the political party in the direction of intellectual life can be detached from Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis" without changing its character altogether.

* * *

These considerations leave us with a number of questions

concerning contemporary debate of which I would like to raise only one in conclusion. The question with which I would like to conclude concerns the prospect of an independent Marxism in India today. I raise this question because I believe that the involvement of the party in Marxist thought, or even its control of it, in the Stalin years was not a mere aberration of Stalinist practice but a logical corollary of Marxist theory in at least some authoritative versions of it. The practice has changed, no doubt, but the implications for theory of this change in practice are not always candidly discussed.

Orthodoxy on questions of theory under the direction of a political party cannot mean the same thing today as it did during Stalin's time. The simple fact is that there is no longer any political party that can speak with the same authority to all Marxists that Communist parties all over the world, including India, did only a generation ago. There are divisions between national Communist parties even as there are divisions within the international Communist movement. Hardly any Communist party has today the moral authority to claim a determining rôle in settling questions of theory. Stalin's *Short Course* was intended to settle questions not only of practice but also of theory; it is hard to visualise another such work acquiring the same kind of authority in the eighties.

It is necessary to discuss the tension that has existed and continues to exist between what may be called "academic Marxism" and "party Marxism", and to examine its sources. There is an academic Marxism, distinct from party Marxism—and increasingly so—no matter how much its proponents might defer to the intellectual authority of Lukacs or Gramsci. Their relationship must be examined, not merely in a general and abstract way, but in the context of each national tradition with its particular intellectual culture and its particular political compulsions. It is often said that the social sciences have had very little autonomous growth in India, that their growth has followed paths laid down in Europe and America; there is truth in this, but the truth applies as much to Indian Marxism as to Indian social science.

If we look at the record since 1956, the intellectual contributions of independent Marxists will appear substantial, at least in Western Europe. One thinks of Habermas in Germany, or

Rodinon in France or E.P. Thompson in England. My own view is that the independent Marxist, mainly in the academic world but also outside, will extend his intellectual influence in the years to come, and in doing so will look over his shoulders less and less to see how the party reacts. Until now, at least in India, he has stood on somewhat uncomfortable ground, between the liberal academic who sees intellectual freedom as an end in itself and the orthodox Marxist who sees the authority of the party as supreme. The academic Marxist has perhaps less reason than he thinks to be on the defensive in his orientation towards the party. Marxist theory, since at least the time of Lenin, has combined the critique of bourgeois society with the exaltation of the Communist party. It has sought to make partisanship the basis of every kind of commitment. The spirit of Marxism requires that the critique of capitalist society be extended to other forms of society as well. Such a critique must have a basis in some kind of social commitment, but it is now too late to argue that that commitment can be guaranteed only by a political party.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Maxime Rodinon, *Marxism and the Muslim World*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1980. p. 5.
2. "Equivoque et inépuisable" is the title used for an essay on Marx by Raymond Aron. See his *Marxismes imaginaires; d'une sainte famille à l'autre*, Paris: Gallimard, 1970.
3. See the "Supplement" by Engels to vol. 3 of *Capital*.

4. Marxist scholars have been from the beginning aware of this, and have tried to provide aids to the reading of *Capital*. See, for instance, the "Introduction" by Korsch to the 1932 German edition of *Das Kapital*, republished in Karl Korsch, *Three Essays on Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 1971. A more recent effort is Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, London: NLB, second edition, 1977.
5. J.M. Keynes, *Essays in Persuasion*, London: Macmillan, 1933, p. 300.
6. This is not to suggest that Marx did not on occasion express himself with great self-assurance regarding his discovery of the laws of motion of capitalist society.
7. One hardly needs to be reminded of the three sources of Marxism—German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism—made famous by Lenin's pamphlet, *The Three Sources and the Three Component Parts of Marxism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1969.
8. The fact that Marxism, which, in its golden age, represented the highest expression of Western intellectual culture, could establish itself only in what was intellectually and culturally the most backward part of Europe, had notable consequences for its further development. This point has been tellingly made by Leszek Kolakowski in his monumental *Main Currents of Marxism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 3 Vols. See also Isaac Deutscher, *Ironies of History*, Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1966.
9. The contrast between Soviet and Western Marxism has now become a commonplace among Marxists themselves. This was not so during Stalin's lifetime. Maurice Merleau-Ponty was perhaps the first notable Marxist to make the contrast between "Leninism" and what he called "Occidental Marxism". See his *Les aventures de la dialectique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1955. From the opposite camp, John Plamenatz made the contrast, with characteristic contempt for the Russian intellect. "Passing from German to Russian Marxism", he wrote, "we leave the horses and come to the mules". (John Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954, p. 191).
10. After the disenchantment with Stalin in the mid-fifties, there was the rise to prominence of Mao Tse-tung, with his celebrated Little Red Book. I do not discuss Mao's ideas at all as the discussion would take me too far afield to enable me to return quickly to my principal argument. But Mao's case would strengthen, not weaken, my argument that there are diverse authoritative versions of Marxism, difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with each other.
11. I have been struck by the astonishing continuity of Russian culture as reflected in Russian prose literature. The sensibility to which Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn appeal is a Russian sensibility, and basically the same as the one to which Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Turgenev appealed.

12. This point was made by Korsch after his break with the Communist Party. See his "Anti-Critique", first published in 1930, in Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, New York: Monthly Review, 1970.
13. Bertrand Russell, *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism*, London: Unwin Books, 1949 (first published 1920), pp. 59-60.
14. V.I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977 (first published 1909), p. 318.
15. It has become a fashion to contrast the shallow materialism (or even positivism) of Engels with the profound dialectics of Marx. See, for instance, Irving Louis Horowitz and Bernadette Hayes, "For Marx/Against Engels: Dialectics Revisited", *The International Journal of Critical Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Fall 1975, pp. 21-33. See also Michael Harrington, *The Twilight of Capitalism*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976.
16. See Lenin's attack on V. Chernov for his "attempt to counterpose Marx to Engels" in *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, p. 84ff.
17. I find the argument for a complete misunderstanding of Marx by Engels or by Kautsky and the other pillars of the Second International to be weak and unconvincing. Marx was not a remote prophet, living in a distant age and out of reach of the people who became his authoritative interpreters after his death. The interpreters to whom the misunderstanding has been attributed lived in the same intellectual environment as Marx and shared the same intellectual presuppositions, and some of them knew him personally and even intimately. If Kautsky—and even Engels—had got Marx all wrong, how can we, at this distance in time and space, ever hope to reconstitute the true Marx?
18. It is no accident that so many of them—Plekhanov, Lenin, Bukharin—gave such a central place in their interpretation of Marx to the famous statement in the "Preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* which begins, "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will".
19. Nikolai Bukharin, *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969 (first published 1921), p. 46.
20. Ibid. p. 37.
21. It received long, hostile reviews from both Lukács and Gramsci. Lukács's review has been republished in *New Left Review*, XXXIX, 1966 as "Technology and Social Relations" (first published 1925); Gramsci's review is to be found in his *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (see n. 38 below).
22. The case for a "natural science of society" is most strongly made by Engels in *Anti-Dühring* to which, it must not be forgotten, Marx had contributed a chapter.
23. I would include not only Kautsky and adherents of his brand of orthodoxy, but also the Austro-Marxists, a good sample of whose work

- may be seen in Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode (eds.), *Austro-Marxism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978. The scholarly contributions of the Austro-Marxists were substantial and, unlike Lukacs, Gramsci or Sartre, they took a positive view of empirical sociology; see, for instance, Otto Neurath, *Empiricism and Sociology*, Dordrecht (Holland): D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1973.
24. G. Plekhanov, *The Development of the Monist View of History*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1956 (first published 1895), p. 165, italics in original.
 25. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, p. 303, italics in original.
 26. E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, London: Merlin Press, 1978. Thompson has moved away from "party" or "orthodox" Marxism to a fairly independent position.
 27. This position goes back to Stalin's famous intervention in the debate over the place of language. It has now become a commonplace of Soviet sociology. See, for instance, V.G. Afanasyev, *The Scientific Management of Society*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971.
 28. The emphasis on "totality" as against the "base-superstructure" distinction is characteristic also of the unorthodox and somewhat personal Marxism of Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*, London: New Left Books, 1976.
 29. Kolakowski sums up the position thus: "As the whole is always prior to its parts, so the determination of parts by the whole is more fundamental than that of some parts by others" (*Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3, p. 268).
 30. Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Problem of Method*, London: Methuen & Co., 1963.
 31. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972, vol. 1, p. 352, n. 2.
 32. Lukacs joined issue with Engels over the latter's concept of the dialectics of nature. See his *History and Class Consciousness*, London: Merlin Press, 1971 (first published 1923), especially the Preface to the New Edition (1967), p. xix ff.
 33. Ibid. p. 6.
 34. Ibid., p. 10.
 35. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, pp. 77-78.
 36. Ibid., 89-126. It may be noted that *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* appeared in a German translation only in 1927, and was probably not accessible to either Lukacs or Korsch in 1923.
 37. Kolakowski has written, "It was undoubtedly thanks to his imprisonment that Gramsci was able to remain a member of the Communist party" (*Main Currents of Marxism*, vol. 3, p. 226).
 38. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971, pp. 456-57.
 39. It is now becoming increasingly apparent even to Marxists and Marxist sympathisers that there is a tension, perhaps an inherent tension, between materialism and dialectic. See Merleau-Ponty, *Les aventures de la dialectique*. For Lenin, of course, there was no problem in

- combining dialectic with materialism: Marx and Engels had emphasized the *dialectical* side of dialectical materialism, but one might just as well emphasize its *materialist* side. See Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*, p. 309 ff.
40. Gramsci castigates Plekhanov, "who, in reality, despite his assertion to the contrary, relapses into vulgar materialism" (*Selections From Prison Notebooks* p. 387), but does not, so far as I am aware, take issue with Lenin on his materialism.
 41. See Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969. For a trenchant critique, see Leszek Kolakowski, "Althusser's Marx", *The Socialist Register*, 1971, pp. 111-28. See also Raymond Aron, "Althusser ou la lecture pseudo-structuraliste de Marx" in *Marxismes imaginaires*, pp. 193-354.
 42. For an account of French Marxism in its social and intellectual setting, see George Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1966; for a lively contrast between French and English Marxism, see E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English" in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*.
 43. Georg Lukacs, "What is Orthodox Marxism?" in *History and Class Consciousness*. But as against this, one may reasonably ask, as Bottomore has done, "More generally, what is the sense of saying that Marxist orthodoxy consists in accepting Marx's method, if at the same time it should be the case that this method produces nothing but false propositions"? (T.B. Bottomore, *Sociology as Social Criticism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1974, p. 105).
 44. This is how Lukacs confronted the argument that facts seemed to go against the Marxist doctrine: "If, in Hegel's terms, becoming now appears as the truth of Being, and process as the truth about things, then this means that the *developing tendencies of history constitute a higher reality than the empirical 'facts'*" (*History and Class Consciousness*, p. 181, italics in original).
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
 46. This is not to say that Lenin hesitated to strike when the opportune moment came or that he did not produce arguments in support of such action. It must not be forgotten that Lenin spelled out the active role of the vanguard party in *What is to be Done?* before he wrote *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. My point is a more limited one, namely, that there is a yawning gap between Lenin's political activism and his theory of knowledge, the presuppositions and implications of his materialist philosophy, which in fact became the established doctrine of the Soviet schools. This point has been noted by others before. Lichtheim, for instance, wrote, "Though Lenin's practice was voluntaristic, his philosophy implied a belief in immutable laws impervious to human volition" (*Marxism in Modern France*, p. 95, n. 25, italics in original). The only thing that I would like to add is that Lenin's philosophy did not merely *imply* this, but hammered the point with singular tenacity.

47. Fifth Congress of the Communist International; Abridged Report, published by the Communist Party of Great Britain, p. 17.
48. The phrase is from Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, p. 42.
49. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 163.
50. Ibid., p. 197.
51. Ibid; p. 51. Those with even a superficial acquaintance of the literature cannot fail to note in this an echo of Marx who wrote in *The Holy Family*, "It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment *regards* as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do". (K Marx and F. Engels, *The Holy Family*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975, p. 44, italics in original).
52. Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, p. 42.
53. Ibid., p. 41, capitals and italics in original.
54. Gramsci, *Selections From Prison Notebooks*, p. 16.
55. Ibid., p. 133.

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