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SOCIOLOGY OR A MARXIST SOCIAL SCIENCE:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF KARL KORSCH

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORK OF KARL KORSCH

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ABSTRACT

My thesis outlines the thought of Karl Korsch by examining the relation of Marxist theory to the historical movement which includes the development of the proletariat on a worldwide scale. This is a unified subjective and objective movement of the socialization of labor.

The analysis demonstrates that the original Marxist theory is no longer applicable for today's society, since it is an historical product itself. Marxism did not stand outside of the movement of history thus it underwent transformations and consequently became a bourgeois philosophy, a false consciousness, no longer the expression of the process of the socialization of labor. Theory was seen as having an independent existence apart from the social relations in the realm of pure thought. Korsch criticized the theorists who took this stance. He claimed that the theorists of the Second International, Lenin and Luxemburg, all drew a sharp line between consciousness and being. Consciousness was understood by them as an independent, static essence which was contrasted to being, as a reflection of an external object. Korsch maintained that together they form a moment in one unified social historical process.

Korsch provided us with an original analysis of the counterrevolution. Yet he did not go far enough with it. He focused primarily on the political sphere instead of explaining this period as a time of the expansion of social labor within the relations of capital and wage labor. This gave rise to new

political forms. Groups in control tried to change the distribution process but could not alter the process of production.

Korsch demonstrated that Marxist theory still provided the framework which could be further developed into a social science. The framework includes; the primacy of the base, the analysis of value, a critical and non-dogmatic approach to Marxist theory, and the principle of historical specificity. This framework provides us with a way to understand the process of the socialization of labor. Korsch presented us with a new definition of revolution as the process of the socialization of labor and the means of production. The revolutionary potential lies with the forces of production, the real labor power of individuals who are bound within the relations of capital and wage-labor. Korsch criticized Marx for his emphasis on the bourgeois form of revolution which relied primarily on the political sphere of the superstructure.

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My studies in the past year taught me the importance

of intense reading. The experience can be described as one of 'illumination'. Korsch's insights have changed the direction of my studies and they also solved many questions I had concerning Marxism and socialism. Marxist theory is a social theory. It is grounded in the analysis of the social relations and processes of production, and the problems of modern society need to be solved within this sphere. The analysis is then taken out of the personal realm. My interest in Korsch's work lies with my joy of learning, love of human life and my desire to understand the world around me in order to discover my role in it. I dedicate my thesis to the future - today's children.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO KARL KORSCH:
BIOGRAPHY AND INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Today all attempts to restore the Marxist doctrine as a whole and in its original function as a theory of the working-class social revolution are reactionary utopias.

- Korsch

The opening statement made by Karl Korsch quoted above is taken from a lecture on Marxism which he gave at Zurich in 1950. It is the last work of his which was translated into English: "Ten Theses on Marxism Today." At the outset it appears to be a rejection of Marxism. But it is precisely this critical stance which is the progressive aspect of Marxist theory. The overarching theme in the following thesis is the relation of the movement of the international proletariat and theory. This relation is analyzed by outlining the development of the thought of Karl Korsch, who defines the proletarian movement as both subjective and objective activity in the process of production, within the relations of capital and wage labor. At the present time this process is carried on without a conscious subjective element. Korsch defines socialization as the active, conscious activity of constructing a socialist society through the establishment of new production relations. Theory is a form of social consciousness which comprehends this process.

The first chapter outlines Korsch's biography and includes his political and intellectual transformations. It

explains the historical context within which the concept 'socialization' first arose and was used by Korsch. The changing historical situation influenced the subject matter Korsch took up for study. The comprehension of the movement of the proletariat as simultaneously subjective and objective requires the understanding of other relations which are the methodological premises upon which Korsch's theory is derived. His theory is an extension of the social-historical laws founded on the base set forth by Marx. These relations and processes are outlined in chapter two.

The following question is addressed in chapter three: how is this movement connected with the changes of Marxist theory? The understanding of this relation serves as the basis upon which Korsch develops his critique of a number of positions in Marxist theory which are part of the history of Marxism. The changes in Marxist theory present the question: how did it become an ideology?

Chapter four examines the development of fascism and the failure of socialism. The process of socialization is taken up here by critically evaluating Korsch's analysis of the attempts at new forms of social organization as well of the counterrevolution.

Karl Korsch was born in the year 1886, in Todstedt, near Hamburg. He came from an average middle class family of six children. Korsch's forefathers had been farmers in the eastern provinces of Germany. Korsch's father after his marriage moved west to a modest-sized farm. But his father sought an even more western-urban atmosphere. His father had always been interested in philosophy, especially in Leibnitz's monadology. The rural life became frustrating and when Karl was eleven the family moved to a more 'enlightened' area, Obermassfeld near Meiningen. There he attended a good secondary school and studied German literature and philosophy, with special emphasis on Kant. His father became the vice president of a bank. They lived a simple life, neither affluent nor poor.

Korsch attended a number of universities. During 1906-7, he studied philosophy and the humanities at Munich, Geneva and Berlin. He then spent time in Switzerland. "...there he learnt to speak French fluently. He also got a very strong taste of the international community there among students and political exiles. He met a lot of Russians who had fled from Tsarism although no famous ones."¹ In 1908 he attended the University of Jena and studied law, specializing in international law and jurisprudence. He was an active member of the Freie Studentenschaft, a loosely structured group of progressive students opposed to the existing militaristic, ritualistic, organized and anti-

semitic student groups. The Freie Studentenschaft was open to all. Its members were involved in a number of activities, which included sporting events, discussions and mutual help schemes. During a tour as a representative of this group, he met Hedda Gagliardi, whom he married in 1913. He graduated summa cum laude in 1911 from Jena in the Faculty of Law. Jena had the famous Zeiss works and in addition it was a great cultural center. Half of the town's inhabitants were students, the other half workers. A number of discussion groups and experiments in labor relations were attempted there which involved both the workers and students. Korsch was not directly involved in the Zeiss works but he attended the meetings at theodor Volkshaus. After the War he became one of their political leaders. Korsch also was involved with Diedrich who published the magazine, die Tat, and his circle. The group had no particular political orientation. It was mainly a cultural group. The members celebrated the traditional holidays although they opposed the existing confining and non-expressive styles of dress and tradition, preferring to create their own.

During the years 1912-14 Korsch worked in England where he translated into German and edited works on English Civil Law. He joined the Fabian society, a socialist organization which proposed public control of industry and had plans to socialize English society. The Fabians put great emphasis on the 'will' to reform. Korsch was still a young intellectual and full of idealism and enthusiasm for social change. This explains his

commitment to the Fabians at the time. The 'will' to reform lies only in one's consciousness from which ideas are thought to be propelled into history. The Fabians had also influenced Eduard Bernstein. Engel's criticized Bernstein's, "Fabian Schwärmerei" fanaticism and sarcastically characterized the Fabians in a letter to Sorge as a "band of do-gooders who have enough sense to perceive the unavoidability of social revolution, but who cannot entrust this gigantic task to the crude proletariat alone, and therefore have the custom of putting themselves at the top; anxiety before revolution is their basic principle. They are the 'cultivated [enlightened, educated, Gebildeten] ones', par excellence."²

With the outbreak of World War I, Korsch was summoned to fight for Germany. He did not want to fight for the 'fatherland', nor "be imprisoned somewhere as an enemy alien without contact with any movement."³ He did want to be with the masses in the army, so he joined a regiment with school friends. This saved him from a courtmartial. His regiment marched through Belgium, a neutral country, but Korsch objected to this action and he was consequently demoted. He never carried a weapon since he thought a person would be just as safe without one. Instead, he made himself useful by making sure the soldiers paid for foodstuffs rather than stealing them. He also worked on patrols and wrote reports. But his main 'war aim' was to keep as many men as possible in his unit alive. In 1917 there was great unrest amongst the soldiers.

Korsch was promoted and became a Captain. His company was known as 'the red company' for his men were in favor of the social 'revolution' and they refused to continue to fight in the capitalist war. Soldiers' and workers' councils were being established all over the country; socialism in Germany seemed to be becoming a reality, with the abdication of the Kaiser and the success of the Russian Revolution. Korsch was elected to serve the soldiers' soviets. His unit was one of the last to be destroyed; this took place in January, 1919.

With the 'November Revolution' in 1918, Korsch hoped for a better Germany. In January, 1919, he was asked by Robert Wilbrandt in Berlin, to be an assistant in the socialization commission presided over by Karl Kautsky of the Social Democrats. Its task was to prepare the coal industry for socialization. This was the context in which he wrote the essay "What is Socialization?"⁴ In this context socialization referred to the active, conscious construction of a socialist society. It did not refer to a social-psychological process of individual development.

In the summer of 1919 Korsch became professor of law at Jena where he lectured on Hegel. There had been an attempt by counter-revolutionaries to seize state power but this had been averted by a strike. Korsch then joined the USPD,⁵ an independent splinter group of the SPD, when it became evident that the Social Democrats were not carrying through the aims of the November Revolution. The Social Democratic Party was

now in power. A struggle ensued between the workers councils and parliament. The law of 1921, according to the Weimar constitution, limited the councils to purely economic activity. The councils were eventually eliminated. Korsch intensively studied Marx in the early 1920's, and with this theoretical foundation and his actual experience in the revolution he became extremely critical of the German Social Democrats who wanted to change only the distribution process, not the process of production. With the realization that the 'November Revolution' failed to establish socialism, Korsch became more concerned with the subjective factor of class consciousness. He felt the lack of concern with class consciousness had led to the failure of socialism. Hedda Korsch described the socialization project in the following way: "The Commission was a bourgeois institution with social democratic members. It was supposed to draw up practical plans for 'socializing' the German economy. The original 1919 government contained SPD and USPD members and they wanted to work out the organizational problems of a socialist economy and of the expected transition. Karl was not nearly as sceptical as so intelligent a person should have been. He was also an enthusiast and his writings on socialization reflected this for nearly a year. The Russian Revolution had a big influence on him and we all thought it was the beginning of a new epoch."⁶

Korsch was concerned with the development of a socialist theory because of the failure of the November Revolution.

This was the setting in which he wrote The Fundamentals of Socialization.⁷ He criticizes the Marxian analysis of the Second International for not providing a theory of socialist construction. The different Marxist tendencies of the time also did not have any transitional program concerning the state. Korsch argues that the Marxian theory had stagnated and was backward, relying on slogans of a 'radical idiom.' The theory of the Social Democrats was concerned only with the modifications within the existing order, instead of with the transformation of the relations of wage-labor and capital. He explained real problem lay with the lack of consciousness on the part of the producers. He continues by saying that Marx's historical materialism was not a particular theory lacking a concept of socialization. Rather, the theory reflects this socialization, and uses

"the identity of objectifying knowledge and activity "⁸, thus providing concepts of action for the realization of socialism. Korsch states this should not detract from continuous struggle within the production relations of wage-labor and capital, for better living conditions, higher wages and more rights in non-revolutionary times. Korsch criticizes the view that pure thought or the will of technicians alone can achieve socialism. The combination of the revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary social conditions of the immediate producers is necessary in order to effect the conscious control over the process of production. Labor becomes directly social in its

form.

After the Kapp Putsch, the USPD and the Communist Party fused to form the KPD. The invigorated group joined the Third International. Korsch accepted the 'Twenty-one points' on entrance of the Communist International with some reservation because he was suspicious of the 'centralized discipline from Russia.'⁹ He joined the party because he felt that this was where the masses were. He also supported the Communist Party and Leninism, at this time, because of the failures of the other German parties in establishing socialism. He thought the KPD could provide better theory, strategy and organization which was found wanting in the German parties. During the period 1920-26 Korsch supported Lenin and the Bolshevisation of the German Communist Party. By 1923 the German economic situation had worsened and the Weimar republic was incapable of dealing with it. The SPD and the KPD formed a coalition in Saxony. Later, they formed a legal workers' government in Thuringen. The Reich's army was sent out and it threatened to dissolve the Saxony government for refusing to dismember its red armies. The workers were requested to protest this action, as they had done before, in the Kapp Putsch by means of a general strike and by blocking the government troops. The SPD leaders and some factions of the KPD refused to take this action. When the Reichswehr arrived, the workers' government collapsed as the troops occupied the area. Korsch had been a Minister in the United Front KPD-USPD government in Thuringia

and had acquired arms for protection from the fascists of Bavaria. He now went underground. Active revolutionary struggle in Germany was over. A period of counterrevolution and stabilization of capitalism was ushered in. The new government elected under emergency regulation in 1924 made it impossible to form a socialist/communist opposition government. Any coalition with the SPD at that time Korsch deemed impossible. As Kellner points out, "Korsch subscribed to the "social fascism" thesis that saw the social Democrats as "nothing but a fraction of German fascism with socialist phraseology" and labeled the whole Social Democratic movement as a species of fascism."¹⁰ Korsch saw "fascism" overcome the November Revolution by 1924. He defined fascism as "the consciously planned counterrevolution of the bourgeoisie that in some lands today is carried along predominately by lower middle-class groups, while in other lands, like ours, it is led by the upper bourgeoisie themselves and their paid agents...this counter-revolution in all its forms we call by the new word fascism, and what we have experienced in the last months was the progressive and consequent attempt to shift this counterrevolution into the saddle...and to stabilize it."¹¹ "Korsch saw the Dawes plan in 1924 - which would regulate German reparation payments for World War I and would loan foreign capital (mostly American) to German industry - as a tactic to stabilize capitalism and the counterrevolution in Germany."¹²

Korsch became editor of a communist journal, Die

Internationale, and he was in charge of ideological affairs. In 1923 he wrote Marxism and Philosophy in which he reaffirmed the importance of understanding Hegel's dialectic. Korsch claimed that the Hegelian dialectical method was the theoretical core of Marxism. It lay bare the relation of form and content. The content was no longer that of the revolutionary bourgeoisie but of the developing proletariat. He was supporting Lenin and Luxemburg against the reformism of the Second International. Korsch presented the 'original' Marxism of Marx and Engel's as the expression of the proletarian struggle of 1848 and Leninism as the current expression of revolutionary proletarian consciousness. After Lenin's death a power struggle developed in the Soviet Union, and in Germany the KPD and SPD were at each other's throats. During the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International in 1924, Korsch supported the task of developing Leninism as the unitary theoretical basis for all parties. He hoped the Communist International would unite all the revolutionary forces. At this time he wrote the essay "Lenin and the Comintern."

With the passage of time, Korsch realized that the Russian Party had come to dominate the German Party and that it was not the expression of proletarian struggle. He publically criticized the Comintern in September 1925. The Comintern distinguished between a feudal land-owning class and an industrial capitalist class in Germany. It proclaimed that the proletariat should support the 'progressive' capitalist

class in its struggle with the remnants of Feudalism. In other words, it supported a united front against the Monarchy. Korsch argued against this stance, maintaining that the real struggle was between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and that the proletariat should not align themselves with the republican strata of the bourgeoisie. Korsch disagreed with the analysis of the Comintern and its KPD allies - "that there was a distinctive difference between the purportedly feudal land-owning class and the industrial capitalist class in Germany, and that the proletariat should side with the more progressive capitalist to destroy the last remnants of feudalism. Korsch argued that there was no more feudalism in Germany and that both capitalist classes carried out their quest for profit on the basis of capitalist relations of production."¹³

He became openly a left-oppositionalist and joined the battle against Stalin. He had contact with Bordiga, the Italian leader in Moscow and with Saprnov of the Russian Workers Opposition. They supported measures of decentralization. Korsch and Saprnov developed a code for correspondence but it was discovered by the Russians and led to Saprnov's destruction. Hedda Korsch states that Korsch had no contact with Trotsky of the left opposition.

So far as I know he had no contact with Trotsky. He thought Trotsky was right about many things and he was in favor of the idea of permanent revolution; but he thought that Trotsky too would have played a power game with the alliances in a nationalist way, of which Korsch

disapproved. Trotsky also wrote and said things which clearly show that he had a different way of approaching the class struggle: Trotsky laid less emphasis than Korsch on the need for consciousness among workers and laid more emphasis on the question of party leadership. 14

Secret diplomacy was taking place between Germany and Russia. In 1925 the Soviet-German friendship treaty, which prepared the ground for the Stalin/Hitler pact of 1929, was signed. Korsch went over to the left opposition when the "open" letter of the Executive Committee of the Comintern to the KPD was published in late August, 1925. It contained a critique of the German left-leadership in the KPD and requested greater adherence to Russian policies. During a speech at a conference in Berlin, April 1926, Korsch raised what he felt was the basic question of revolution, the Russian question. Korsch explained that Stalin and Bukharin represented a peasant-oriented opportunist tendency against the worker-oriented revolution, a countertendency represented by Zinoviev. Stalin's thesis of "socialism in one country" was seen by Korsch as a falsification of Lenin and he compared it to the revisionism of Bernstein and Kautsky (Social Democrats) at the end of the war. Korsch criticized the thesis of the Stalinists, that there was a "relative stabilization of capitalism." Korsch opposed this thinly-veiled justification for a united front policy. The left-opposition movement, some members of which were involved with "Kommunistische Politik", called for a "new Zimmerwald" conference to unite all opponents of Stalinism.

The group wanted to re-establish the unity of Marxist theory and the proletarian movement. They saw it had become distorted by both Soviet and German Stalinists and they thought that the KPD and Comintern were taking Social Democratic reformist positions on important issues. Korsch criticized the Soviet Union, the Comintern and the KPD as a czarist "dictatorship against the proletariat." Korsch did not reduce the explanation of the struggles in Germany and Russia to a struggle between the leaders, but rather he saw it rooted in the class struggle.

From the beginning, the revolutionary proletarian forces had to struggle against those who wanted a "bourgeois agrarian revolution in Russia." From the beginning, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" had to exercise "state repression" against the previously ruling local bourgeoisie and an external defensive war against the capitalist powers, thus introducing "new forms of class struggle." This process of defending the "Soviet fatherland gave rise to a new contradiction that would fatefully plague the subsequent development of the Soviet Union and would have dire consequences for the entire international revolutionary movement: the contradiction between "revolutionary state necessity" and "proletarian class necessity." This objective contradiction was to force/allow Lenin in the early 1920's to reject the demands of the workers opposition and Trotsky to use the Red Army to crush workers' revolts. It then served to justify an increasingly centralized dictatorship of the party and diminution of the Soviets when the NEP replaced the previous "war communism". Then Stalin's version of the slogan "socialism in one country" (sic) was used to justify the suppression and purging of the revolutionary opposition and the construction of a counter-revolutionary state apparatus and party politics on both a national and international scale. Hence Korsch concluded that the revolutionary working class had suffered "an almost unbroken chain of defeats, including the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the 1920/1 suppression of the Leningrad workers opposition, the crushing of the Kronstadt uprising, the purging of the Trotskyists in 1923/4, the

purging of the left opposition in 1925/6, and Stalin's recent victory over the Trotsky-Zinoviev left-oppositionalist bloc." This meant that the counterrevolution had triumphed in the Soviet Union and had "sacrificed the proletarian revolution of Red October" through the erection of a "new capitalistic class state." Or, to put it differently, the interests of the large farmers (the kulaks), the remnants of the bourgeoisie, and the Stalinist elements in the party-state apparatus had triumphed over the revolutionary working-class forces." 15

Korsch described this as part of the world wide consolidation of bourgeois power after its near collapse during World War I. Korsch was totally excluded from the Comintern and the German Party by June 1926 after he refused to support the treaty. He was attacked by both Stalin and Bukharin for 'deviating' from the Party line, for being a revisionist and an 'intellectual' (professor). Korsch was finally purged in 1926. He then produced and financed the magazine "Kommunistische Politik" for a period of two years.

Up to this point Korsch had accused the Stalinists of not being faithful to Leninism. Eventually he came to criticize Leninism as well, especially the Leninist theory of the party and the state. Korsch claimed that although 'Leninism' may have achieved historical results in the past, it was not relevant to the new international situation. Korsch further claimed that a form of 'Leninism' had been used by Stalin to hasten the development of 'state-capital' in Russia.

Korsch's identification with Leninism at the time was not based on the unshakable "truth" of the Leninist theory but rather arose from the solidarity with the Leninist forces: those workers and groups who in the name of Leninism carried out actual revolutionary struggles. He saw a struggle taking place in Europe from about 1921-1928 between

Leninist revolutionary forces and counter-revolutionary forces, and supported the revolutionary forces thus Leninism. His critique of Stalinism as a counterrevolutionary opportunistic tendency was thus carried out from the standpoint of a Leninism rooted in the left-oppositionalist forces to Stalin in the Soviet Union and in the world Communist movement. It was only after the definite defeat of the left-revolutionary forces in the Soviet Union and Europe, who proclaimed themselves the true heirs of Leninism, that Korsch began to put Leninism itself in question. He concluded that Leninism had become an ideology utilized for counter-revolutionary purposes (by the Stalinists) and that therefore the time had come to "cut the umbilical cord to Leninism." 16

Korsch understood that blind allegiance to the leaders and theories of the past was not adequate for meeting the challenges of the changing historical circumstances. Korsch's essay "The Second Party" contains his analysis of the crisis of the Soviet Union and its impact on the international movement. He explains the development of the split between Stalin and the left-oppositionalists (Trotsky, Zinoviev, Saporonov).

With the failure of the socialist movement and the triumph of fascism, Korsch questioned both Marxism and his own theory. He criticized Marx's theory itself for preserving theoretical remnants of the French Revolution.

Whereas earlier Korsch blamed the failure of the working class movement on its neglect/suppression of the revolutionary core of Marxism and urged a restoration of revolutionary Marxism, he now began to assess the extent to which Marxism itself was responsible for the debacles of the working-class movement: "It is deceptive and even false to see the theoretical origins of the present crisis as resulting either from a perversion or an oversimplification of Marx's and Engel's revolutionary theory at the hands of their successors. It is equally misleading to juxtapose this degenerated falsified Marxism to the 'pure theory' of Marx

and Engel's themselves. In the final analysis, today's crisis is the crisis of Marx's and Engel's theory as well. 17

He describes Marxist analysis as the most advanced theory in social science, while remaining partly philosophical in form. Korsch never abandoned 'Marxism', in the sense of a commitment to the liberation of the proletariat. He saw that the daily struggle between capital and wage labor was the motor force of history and the force for change. The social processes were Korsch's pivotal point of departure for his theory.

Korsch's later work consisted of an examination of various Marxist theories, which were especially critical of the 'exaggerated' importance of the State and politics. He criticized Marx's own theory for not abandoning a bourgeois standpoint completely.

As you know, in my orthodox period I always claimed that the revolutionary kernel of Marx's economic theory was in its "critique", i.e. the essential critical dissolution of bourgeois "political economy."In my last lessons of winter 32-33 I have changed my viewpoint a little. I have shown how modest-if looked at very closely-is the critical contribution as opposed to Capital's main economic content, how little developed were the critical points and how a real critique even of classical economy was traceable only in the first volume of Capital, edited by Marx himself, while the manuscripts worked on and edited by Engels and Kautsky (second and third volume of Capital; Theories of Surplus Value) show Marx only as a critic of vulgar economics and actually as a faithful disciple and follower of classical economics in the details of money, income, etc...There was a connection between the bourgeois character of Marx's politics and the would-be continuation of the critical dissolution of bourgeois economics into a science directly social and therefore into a praxis directly revolutionary...Marx certainly developed the historical critique of the economic categories

as well (and Sorel went too far when he challenged this) but he proclaimed the "overcoming" of economics into a directly social science only in the abstract instead of actually bringing it about."¹⁸

After his expulsion from the party and before he emigrated to the United States, Korsch had been a lecturer at the Karl-Marx-Schule in Neukölln, a proletarian suburb of Berlin. Hedda Korsch had also taught there. The school was 'experimental' involving students from kindergarten to the Ph.D. It took students 'from the cradle to the grave.'¹⁹ He had helped with anti-Hitler campaigns underground. He had become a liability to his friends and stayed with Brecht in Denmark before settling in the United States. Korsch had also been in England in 1936, when he wrote his intellectual biography: Karl Marx. It was commissioned by the London School of Economics. "A review of Karl Marx in the Sociological Review in 1939 referred to the book as "the Marx study most solidly close to the actual teachings of Marx...and invaluable help in finding out about Marx, the real Marx as distinct from the figment his disciples made of his doctrine"; cited approvingly by Erich Gerlach in "Karl Korsch's Undogmatic Marxism," International Socialism (London) no. 19 (1964), no. 22."²⁰ This work was to be a popularization of Marx for a wide audience and did not contain his criticisms of Marxist theory. He also was interested in Geopolitics, world history, the 'Third World' and mathematics. He became a member of the Gesellschaft für empirische Philosophie. Korsch emigrated to the United States in 1936 during Hitler's reign when it became unsafe to stay and he could no longer work.

While in the United States, Korsch kept an open mind on the development of working class struggle there. His main activity was journalistic. He wrote for a number of obscure journals, mainly on the counterrevolutionary movement in the International Council Correspondence, Living Marxism, New Essays and Southern Socialist. He later became interested in China and he placed his hopes of progressive, world development on the colonial nations rather than on Europe. He was also concerned with developing Marxist theory to keep pace with the advances of the other sciences. His last work was an uncompleted 'Manuscript of Abolitions.' It dealt with the future abolition of the social divisions in modern society.

Korsch developed a close friendship with Bertolt Brecht, the playwright; in fact, Brecht referred to Korsch as 'his teacher for life.' In the United States Korsch travelled widely yet never found steady employment although he had been a full professor in Germany in the early 1920's.

Korsch's impression of the United States was that it was 'incomprehensible' to most people. It seemed that individuals felt small, isolated, powerless, amongst what seemed to be unlimited possibilities in science and general living conditions. This made it hard for a person to get a grasp of the situation; change seemed to be the principle of the American scene and of its science.

In the process of constant change, Korsch writes, "despite all fluctuation on the surface, there is no dangerous crisislike state, no conflict that isn't neutralized, no idea that is not at once ideologized and welcomed as a novelty by the dominant ideology." All this simultaneous change and

stability/sameness has "the appearance of true progress," but it is really just monopoly capital reproducing itself, creating a confusing garden of earthly delights for consumption to provide "Prosperity everlasting" - which means in effect higher profits and more efficient social control for the monopolists." 21

Korsch's political participation was minimal while in the United States, but he maintained contact with several small working class groups. His attitude can best be summed up in the following.

One can only say and do here what is false, misunderstood, incomprehensible, if one does not wish to limit oneself to the Sisyphean task of struggling against the poisoning work of the C.P. (Communist party)". Struggling against American reformist, bureaucratized, and corrupt unions, as against the Communist party, would only in any case serve the interests of the bourgeoisie against labor...The various political groups merely engage in a confused "tug of war" against each other, without the prospect of any decisive victory that will aid the working class. What could one do in this situation, Korsch wondered. Yet, Korsch made a continuous effort to analyze the economic-political situation in America, contributed articles to leading Marxist journals, gave lectures to workers and university people throughout his travels in the United States, and maintained close contact with Paul Mattick and the group of council communists - but had little hope of any possibility of real radical change or efficacious political activism. "What the relatively most active man of our tendency, Paul Mattick, does, "Korsch wrote to Partos, "appears to me too isolated, too short term for me to get involved with it." 22

Korsch reflected upon the previous twenty years of class struggle, and he concluded that it had mostly consisted of defeats, with the exception of the short-lived Spanish anarchist movement. He conceived the workers movement of the past as preparing the way for internal-capitalist progress, which had

been brought about in counterrevolutionary form through 'fascism' on a world-wide scale. Korsch claimed the working class was still potentially revolutionary, but actually counterrevolutionary..

To summarize, Korsch's early work on socialization was influenced by his participation in political and social movements during the war years (1914-1919). This concept became the basis upon which he analyzed future movements for it emphasized schemes for the practical implementation of socialism. He worked with the Social democrats until he realized that they were only interested in cosmetic reforms of capitalism. They were also instrumental in dismantling the developing workers councils in the Weimar Republic. With the failure of the November Revolution Korsch joined a splinter group which broke with the SPD. This group joined the Communist Party to form the KPD of the Third International. This is the period in which Korsch wrote his criticisms of the Second International.

At the same time he supported Leninism hoping that it would spur on the revolutionary forces in Germany. It also appeared to be the only existing progressive tendency. At this point he identified revolutionary theory as Leninism, stating it was the expression of the working class consciousness and process of socialization. He became critical of Leninism, with the Stalinization of Russia, and he viewed it as a theory of the intelligensia, as an ideology or false consciousness. In fact the relations of capital and wage-labor had been further developed in Russia during this period. Further, the German

Party came increasingly under the influence of the Russian Party and Korsch was forced to rethink questions of revolutionary strategy and tactics. The triumph of fascism and his move to the United States made Korsch reflect further upon the past struggles and theories, and he analyzed the experimental social organizations of the past as well as previous counter-revolutions. Korsch came to criticize the traditional Marxist view of revolution and politics, and he emphasized that proletarian revolution is a process of conscious socialist transformation. With the recession of the revolutionary movement the old production relations were left in tact and the revolutionary subject disappeared from the world-historical stage.

In the United States Korsch developed other interests. A letter to Brecht demonstrates Korsch's changing view of history.

Korsch's expulsion from the worldrevolutionary movement seems to have elevated him to an increasingly Olympian perspective. This drive to grasp the dynamics of the world-historical totality, is expressed in Korsch's report to Brecht on "The Present Situation and Perspectives." Korsch tells how he broke off his studies of the Phillipines and the struggles between the new colonies and national liberation movements to grasp the dynamics of a "new era of regression on a world-wide scale." Korsch saw new tendencies of intellectual retrogression and new forms of imperialist barbarism that led to a comparison with the decline of the Roman Empire. Striking is his desire to grasp the dynamics of the whole process of history from the "century of Marx" (1848-1948) to the present day." 23

Another letter, this one to Dawson, confirms his changed views.

He saw it had come time for those concerned with progressive social change to break with the 'Marx-Lenin-Trotsky' legend, which he felt many people still clung to. He wrote to Dawson, "What separates us can perhaps be most easily expressed by a phrase which I keep repeating to my dear friend, George Gloss - that his group represents at best, the ideas of the revolution of the nineteenth century, while I am only interested in that of the twentieth century."²⁴

Korsch spent his last years in McLeans Psychiatric Hospital and died of sclerosis in Belmont, Massachusetts, October 21, 1961.²⁵

Footnotes

1. Hedda Korsch, "Memories of Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec. 1972: p. 37. Interviewed by Fred Halliday.
2. Karl Korsch, Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, (edited by Douglas Kellner) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 25 - cited from footnote 20 (my English explanation).
3. Hedda Korsch, "Memories of Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec 1972: p. 39.
4. Karl Korsch, "What is Socialization?" New German Critique, No. 6 (Fall 1975): 60-81.
5. USPD - The Independent Socialist Party which had split from the Social Democratic Party in 1917 as a socialist anti-war coalition. The membership was diverse. Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky and Eduard Bernstein all belonged to it.
In September 1919, it had 750,000 members.
6. Hedda Korsch, "Memories of Karl Korsch," New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec 1972: p. 40.
7. Karl Korsch, "The Fundamentals of Socialization", Revolutionary Theory (Austin: University of Texas Press) edited by Douglas Kellner pp. 124-133.
8. Karl Korsch, Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory (edited by Douglas Kellner) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 125.
9. Hedda Korsch, "Memories for Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec 1972: p. 40.
10. Douglas Kellner, Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 42, cited from Buckmiller's Marxismus, pp. 56-67.
11. Ibid., p. 42, cited from Korsch's report on the meeting of the Third Landstag in Thuringen Vol. 1, 1924.
12. Ibid., p. 43.
13. Ibid., p. 49.
14. Hedda Korsch, "Memories of Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec 1972: p. 42.
15. Karl Korsch, Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, (edited by Douglas Kellner) (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), pp. 58-9, translated from Korsch's "Ten Years of Class Struggle in the Soviet Union", in Politische Texte.
16. Ibid., p. 60.

17. Ibid., p. 78, cited from Korsch's "The Crisis of Marxism".
18. Ibid., pp. 98-99, cited from a letter to Partos, June 12, 1939.
19. Hedda Korsch, "Memories of Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec. 1972: p. 43.
20. Op. cit., pp. 111-2, footnote 115.
21. Ibid., pp. 92-93, cited from Korsch's letter to Partos, "On American Science", July, 1939.
22. Ibid., p. 93.
23. Ibid., p. 104, cited from a letter to Brecht, April, 18, 1947.
24. Ibid., p. 292, cited from a letter to Dawson, May 3, 1948.
25. The above biographical information was taken from Kellner, Douglas. Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory. Austin: University Press, 1977, pp. 3-105. Korsch, Hedda, "Memories of Karl Korsch", New Left Review, No. 76, Nov/Dec. 1972: 33-35. Interviewed by Fred Halliday.

CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGICAL PREMISES:
KARL KORSCH'S CONTRIBUTION TO
MARX'S MATERIALISM

INTRODUCTION

The anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy
of the ape. - Karl Marx

We are often confronted with theories of society which suggest we are at the "end of history," as if we had reached the apex of civilization and are now suspended in time. Preceding periods are seen as a linear development leading up to this stage. The description of "progress" often portrays an automatic process of social development which follows some cosmic law of nature. There is no necessity in history, other than what human beings have made necessary. This does not mean there are no "laws" which govern society's development; there are, but these laws are social and do not emanate from the heavens, or from "nature", but are our own earthly creations, although they are not always our conscious creations.

Ecclectic views of man and society piece together many disparate theories, and by means of this synthesis of concepts they hope to discover the secrets of society. But alas, these concepts only reside in the investigator's head. To discover the "motor force" of modern society, we must examine it concretely to grasp the real fullness of the beauty and sorrow of human organization. There is no place for ethnocentricity in the study of societies and of cultures; each epoch of human history has its own law of motion. Yet, that is not to say

there is no guiding thread which links together the world system today. But this is different than looking down upon society through a certain schema or fitting society into categories of someone's fantastic making.

Human Nature and Historical Specificity

Korsch claims Marx did not lay down any general propositions concerning the essential nature of society or the universal nature of "man." Rather, he described the particular conditions and developmental tendencies within the historical form of bourgeois society.

Korsch's most developed view of "human nature" can be illuminated by an examination of his book review of Vernon Venable's Human Nature: The Marxian View, 1945.¹ Venable describes the human being not as a development out of any particular form of society, but from an a-historical, cosmic concept of "man as an organism." Venable makes no distinction between different phases of Marx's theory. Marx's early philosophical writings are lumped together with his later analysis, in an uncritical manner. In addition, Venable disregards the different purposes for which Marx wrote various articles, and he made no distinction between the writings of Marx and Engels. Further, he was preoccupied with the "ethical" factor. Korsch states the whole book appears as an attempt to prove "empirical Marx does not refute ethical Marxism."² He then criticizes Venable by explaining that Marx's theory, in Capital, forms a dynamic whole and does not need to be embellished

with "ethics". The theory is a social theory, describing what social-individuals do in a particular society, recognizing that they are not always conscious of what they do. There is no need to speak of "humanism" in the abstract, as a general concept; for Marx and Korsch there is no universal human essence apart from the creation of an individual through his or her particular social relations in which he or she resides and actualizes.

Historical specificity is a key concept in Korsch's thought. He is not the originator of it; he took it over from Marx, giving particular theoretical expression to it. He emphasized the importance of the critique of political economy, the "anatomy" of civil society. Thus bourgeois society is treated as a transitory organization of society capable of change. Social change is a two-fold process which is objective in the economic basis of bourgeois society, and subjective within the new division of social classes arising from this basis.³

The principle of historical specificity has been applied here to "nature" and the "human individual", both having been conceived as social, in terms of a definite historical epoch. Korsch illustrates this principle further by means of the example of which landed property has played different roles in various historical epochs of society. The concept 'rent' could not be applied to primitive society, for it specifically pertains to the bourgeois epoch. Yet, this is the mistake of

Ricardo, who represented bourgeois categories as eternal, thus reading them back into history. The central category of production which Korsch says represents the modern epoch is industrial-capital. Though 'rent' is a particular category of bourgeois society, the fundamental analysis begins with the particular mode of production which creates the form of rent. The subject matter of Capital is the analysis of the production process in the society of industrial-capitalism.⁴ This dominant form of capital production is that of the self-valorization of value. Ricardo began his analysis of the system with the general concept 'value'; Marx and Korsch examine not the general concept, but the social relations underlying this concept. Their aim is with the historically specific character of production in bourgeois society. Therefore, the general term 'value' is analyzed in its phenomenal form of value, the external form in which the 'intrinsic' value of a given commodity manifests itself in the exchange of commodities.

What Korsch describes as 'intrinsic' value has been attacked by various interpreters of Marx as being a remnant of Hegelian mysticism. Korsch states it is precisely this so-called "mysticism" which is at the crux of Marx's analysis. It concerns the discovery of the specific character of those social relations which for a definite historical epoch appear to the subjects themselves in the "disguised and perverted form of relations of things."⁵ "'Value' then in all its denominations, just as other economic things or relations such

as 'commodity,' 'money', 'labor-power', 'capital,' means to Marx a socio-historical fact or something which though not physical is still given in an empirically verifiable manner."⁶

Korsch continues to explain the specific character of the commodity production which "incorporates the flesh-blood in the hands and heads of wage-laborers, the commodity labor-power."⁷ The laborer sells (contracts) his/her labor power and becomes as every other article of the market, exposed to the fluctuations of the market.

Korsch claims that the specific feature of Marx's theory, that it was only an analysis of commodity production in Western Europe and North America, has been neglected. He says it cannot be just transplanted to new ground without an investigation of the mode of production in other social formations and its connection to the world system. Korsch sees this historically specific aspect lost within the abyss of academia and ideology, e.g. in the Soviet State where Marxism became a canonized State ideology, rather than a continuing analysis of the social relations existing there.

Marxist theory is concerned with the historical-social activity of a particular mode of production underlying the present epoch of 'socio-economic' formation or the system of capital production in its actual development. It is not concerned with all aspects of society, for it concentrates on the economic-social foundation and on the investigation of the social laws which govern it and the inherent economic crises

of that particular system.⁸

Theory and the Movement of the Proletariat

Form has no value if its not the form of its content.

- Hegel

This section examines Korsch's thought concerning the relation of socialization and theory. These concepts have different meanings depending on the particular historical situation. Some of his earlier works have not been examined thus far in this paper and will be considered now. They are ambiguous and demonstrate the development of Korsch's thought, as well as reflecting the historical movements of his time.

The first three articles written by Korsch concerning the relation of theory and socialization are ambiguous; they adhere to Leninism which is seen as the extension of Marx's theory and as the expression of class consciousness. The articles must be understood in light of the purpose for which they were composed and the context in which they were written.

"The Marxist Dialectic,"⁹ 1923, was written to reaffirm the importance of the Hegelian Dialectic in Marxist theory, the importance of corresponding content and form. In other words, the method within a theory should be an expression of the social reality (this is opposed to the metaphysical view which juxtaposed subject/object; being/thought). Korsch states that Marx's theory is "scientific socialism," precisely because of this method, but he does not fully explain it here. He

appears to be working out his own idealist tendencies while coming to grips with his own understanding of the Russian Revolution.

Marx did not create the proletarian class consciousness nor did he create the proletarian class movement. Korsch describes Marx as creating the "theoretical-scientific expression" of the "new content of the consciousness of the proletariat." He "thereby elevated this proletarian class consciousness to a higher level of its being."¹⁰ This theoretical expression is explained by Korsch not as a "mere passive 'reflex' of the real historical movement of the proletariat", but as part of the historical transformation.¹¹ Korsch continues by describing Marx's theory as the organized class consciousness of the proletariat, as distinguished from the formless views of the proletarian class. He also states that both Capital and "The Communist Manifesto" served as the theoretical expression of revolutionary proletarian class action.

In his article, "On Materialist Dialectic",¹² Korsch again states the importance of an understanding of Hegel. At this time Korsch was a member of the Comintern and an avid supporter of Lenin. He quotes Lenin who said that the understanding of Hegel from a materialist standpoint, was an important task.¹³ This came under attack from various factions within the Comintern who saw in it a possible avenue for a neo-Hegelian influence to enter Marxist theory.

Korsch explains that the method has to be intricately related to the social reality. The method used to explain

society is itself revolutionary and if it is not understood correctly consequences for the practical movement would be dire.

Thus he criticized Bukharin who believed the "scientific method" for the study of society was embodied in the empirical methods of the natural sciences with the corresponding positive-historical method for the social sciences. Korsch claims this method is a specific-bourgeois method of research because it can only capture the appearance (description) of phenomena and not the social forces which give rise to the appearance.

The other faction Korsch criticized was headed by A. Thalheimer who stated that there was a need to "work out a dialectic as an urgent necessity to create a comprehensive and orderly world-view for the proletariat which lies beyond the practical needs of struggle."¹⁴ Korsch saw this as Hegelianism itself, for theory cannot precede the historical movement. Thus, Korsch criticized Thalheimer for only superficially understanding the Hegelian dialectic and its relationship to dialectical materialism. This relationship is not just an "over-turning or standing Hegel on his head", (not just a substitution of the "material" for the "ideal") by Marx, of a method otherwise unchanged.

This article contains one of Korsch's clearest declarations of his acceptance of Leninism. He states: "in our conception what constitutes the essence of materialist dialectic, that is, Hegel's dialectic applied materialistically by Marx and Lenin."¹⁵

Korsch explains that the theories of the Classical Economists and Classical German Philosophers were theoretical expressions of the development of bourgeois society. They captured the essence of the movement of the bourgeoisie during its revolutionary period. Although they recognized contradictions, they could not go beyond them, because of their a-priori class standpoint. For them, history had ended. This is where Korsch saw Marx's theory as revolutionary. It was historically specific and consciously class based as opposed to advocating a 'universally valid theory'. The contradictions arrived at in bourgeois philosophy could only be solved practically, socially, by changes in the organization of society. Korsch understood Leninism to be carrying on this theory and practice of Marx.

It is only the new science of the proletarian class which can break this ban, a science that unlike bourgeois science is no longer just "pure" theoretical science, but is revolutionary practice at the same time. The political economy of Karl Marx and the materialist dialectic of the proletarian class lead in their practical application to a dissolution of these contradictions in the reality of social life, and thereby at the same time in the reality of thought which is a real component of this social reality. It is thus we must understand Karl Marx when he credits proletarian class consciousness and his materialist-dialectical method with a power never possessed, not even in its last, richest and highest Hegelian development. Just for the proletariat, just for it and only for it, will it be possible, through the development of its class consciousness become practical in tendency, to overcome that fetter of a still remaining "immediacy" or "abstraction" which for all purely perceiving behavior, for Hegel's idealist dialectic as well, clearly remains standing in insurperable "contradictions." It is here, and not in a merely abstract "inversion" or "turning

upside down," that lies the revolutionary further development of the idealist dialectic, of classical bourgeois's philosophy, into that materialist dialectic which has been theoretically conceptualized by Karl Marx as the method of a new science and practice of the proletarian class, and has been applied in theory and practice alike by Lenin. 16

Thus, Korsch argues against the creation of a "system of dialectics," as if it were a free-floating set of ideas apart from the existing social relations, which could be taught as a "practical science" with its own abstract "material". Korsch claims it could only be applied concretely in the practice of the proletarian revolution with a transformation of the social relations. In this way Marx's theory would be superceded and the creation of new categories of thought would correspond to the new production relations. This could not be worked out in advance; he understood that theory could not "leap" over history.

The above articles were written during the same period in which Marxism and Philosophy,¹⁷ 1923, was published. The latter is an examination of the problems stated above in greater detail, and it will be dealt with in the following chapter. The "Anti-Critique of Marxism and Philosophy",¹⁸ 1930, shows clearly Korsch's abandonment of idealism, yet in the article, "A Non-Dogmatic Approach to Marxism",¹⁹ 1931, there still remains an idealist remnant. Korsch states:

Materialist dialectics then, is the historical investigation of the manner in which in a given revolutionary period, and during the different phases of that period, particular social classes groups, individuals form and accept new words and

ideas. It deals with the often unusual and remarkable forms in which they connect their own and other peoples' thoughts and cooperate in disintegrating the existing closed systems of knowledge and in replacing them by other and more flexible systems or, in the most favorable case, by no system at all but by a new and completely unfettered movement of free thought passing rapidly through the changing phases of a more or less continuous or discontinuous development. 20

Here we can see that Korsch does not address the practical/social change which would be a pre-condition for all this. Thus, he remains in the realm of "free ideas."

In this document, Korsch puts together several short statements which he thought represented the critical, non-dogmatic and activistic tendencies of Marxism. It was written for an American audience which he states has never seriously taken up the study of Marxism. He felt at that time nevertheless that there was little use in discussing controversial points of social theory if it was not part of an existing social struggle.

He again states the importance of Hegel and of understanding his philosophy within the context it developed. He refers to statements by Sorel in 1902, "The Materialist Conception of History"²¹ and by Lenin in "The Materialist vs Objectivism",²² 1894. The latter work argues against the idea of a "necessity in history", and it ends with the statement that only a certain class by its action directs the content of history; the element of a party is clearly implied.²³ Korsch ends the document with his own statement of the necessity for

the content of a theory to be connected with the material interests of a definite class.

In Korsch's work, "Leading Principles of Marxism: a Restatement,"²⁴ 1937, he describes Marx's theory as a practical instrument for the struggle of the proletariat.²⁵ In this theory, the actual concrete social reality is expressed in categories of thought.²⁶ Korsch's book, Karl Marx,²⁷ 1938, includes a clearer conception of the relation of socialization and theory. He claims the connection between Marxist theory and the practical movement is not unique. The bourgeois theories also served as practical weapons for the rising industrial classes in their struggle against feudalism.²⁸ Korsch states that the dialectical materialist theory is not an absolute truth but an historical and practical form of social consciousness.²⁹ This means the theory itself, as all ideas are, is connected with a definite historical epoch and is itself an historical product expressing the social development of a definite social class and not an 'objective-pure-free science' standing above the relations of society.³⁰ The specific class character of all phenomena is realized. The seemingly autonomous character of the state, family, law, philosophy is discovered to be connected to commodity production in which it appears as if capitalists create surplus value when in fact the producers do.

The fullest explanation of the subject matter is found in Karl Marx, Part II Political Economy, Chapter XI, "The Ultimate Aims of Marx's Critique of Political Economy." Korsch

again states the importance of Marx's transformation of a so-called "absolute and timeless" science into an historical-concrete context, particularly in his analysis of the commodity and the fetishism thereof. In other words, Korsch saw the important contribution of Marx's theory in the 'historicizing' of the theory of the classical political economists. He understood their theory as developing along with a particular mode of production as its ideological supplement, incorporating the new class content. With this in mind it is possible to take a critical look at the categories of analysis.

On the one hand, because of the fetish character which attaches itself to all economic categories beginning with the fundamental categories of commodity and of money, these categories do not apply to any real and directly given object; the presumed objects" of economics are themselves nothing but materially disguised expressions for the definite relations into which men enter among themselves, in the social production of their means of existence. On the other hand, the economic categories, in spite of their fetish character or, perhaps because of it, represent the necessary form in which that particular historical and historically transitory state of an "imperfect sociality," which is characteristic of the bourgeois production relations, is reflected in the social consciousness of this epoch. 31

Actually it is the indirect social relations between persons expressed through things/commodities which Korsch is explaining. Because of these relations there are certain thought-forms corresponding to them inseparably connected to the social laws of the bourgeois mode of production. Thus these social laws can only be criticized but not superceded by pure theory or pure action. Just because they are acknowledged

in thought they do not change. The fetish character of commodities can only be overcome by the practical activity by the associated producers, with the understanding of the theory of value. Korsch argues Marx was "first and foremost an economic investigator,"³² and this statement could cause confusion on the part of the reader who is looking for the explanation of "social law." It would be more appropriate to describe Marx's theory as one of social relations expressed through economics. This did not mean Marx forsook the study of the classical economists. In spite of his criticisms of them, they provided valuable theoretical insights which corresponded to the relations of their society. In fact, they were more valuable than those of the Historical School which dispensed with economic concepts and of the social Utopians who relegated all people to the laboring class laborers, sought to distribute money equally and to construct imaginary future societies without understanding the value relation. He also stood closer to the theory of the classicists than to the "theories of violence." Although these theories may have been produced by sincere "socialistically-minded" people, they were unaware of the real motor force of historical development. Instead, they explained the development of class relations in terms of pure force, politics, thus appealing to classless generalities for solutions.³³

Korsch's view of socialization culminated in the understanding that the analysis of society as expressed in Capital and as explained in the tendency of capital accumulation under

those particular production relations could only be changed by a practical transformation. Therefore, although theory could explicitly explain the social relations, the answer to the analysis was not a theoretical, but a practical one. He stated that this could only be accomplished by a conscious social movement of producers to eliminate the commodity-fetish through a direct social organization of Labor.³⁴ In other words, it was to be "an association of free men who work with the common means of production and consciously expend their many individual labour powers as a combined social labour power."³⁵ Most importantly, in Korsch's last statement on the matter in his critique of Vernon Venable's, Human Nature: The Marxian View, he states that Marx had never raised a "mere theory to the rank of an actual maker of historical deeds."³⁶

Thus Marx's revolutionary theory and practice formed at all times an inseparable whole, and this whole is what is living to-day of Marx. His real aim, even in this strictly theoretical work Capital, was to co-operate in one way or another in the historical struggle of the modern proletariat, to whom he was the first to give a scientific knowledge of its class position and its class needs, a true and materialistic knowledge of the conditions necessary for its own emancipation and thus, at the same time, for the further development of the social life of mankind. 37

The unity of theory and practice does not mean the arbitrary selection of tasks by any 'sympathetic' person to be 'put into practice', in order to help the class struggle. The class struggle is an everyday process arising from the relations between capital and wage-labor. The unity of theory and practice will not be attained until the producers overthrow the

existing contradictions of bourgeois society with the creation of a directly social labor and a science founded upon it.

Theory is a form of social consciousness, subjectivity; practice is both the subjective and objective elements of the proletariat in the process of production. This consists of objectifying or positing one self through labor to create value. At the present time the process of production is carried on both objectively and subjectively but not consciously. The development of a conscious subjective element and conscious control of the process of production would be the 'socialist' socialization. These relations lay bare a scientific foundation for the understanding of present society and its developmental tendencies. Furthermore it would mean that the indirect social relations which appear as economics would be transformed into a directly social labor, where the expenditure of many private labor powers is a combined social labor power. This consists of the overthrow of fetishism and the social surplus into new relations of a directly social labor. New relations would mean new categories of thought. This process would include the conscious application of theoretical knowledge to the process of production and not just a theoretical comprehension, which is all that is possible now, a theoretical comprehension of the historical process which is both objective and subjective. The subjective is a false or nonconsciousness.

Nondogmatic and Critical Marxism

Korsch took the stance of viewing Marxism itself critically. Even during the period of his adherence to Leninism he was critical of the way in which Marxism was used by various groups. His support of the Comintern was due to his belief that it was an organization of the proletariat working towards a direct socialization of the process of production. With the realization that the goals had become thwarted, he left the organization.

Korsch's view of Marxism can thus best be described as non-dogmatic, for it sought to apply the principles of materialist dialectic to itself. This concerned the examination of the different theories of Marxism which had developed, in terms of the social conditions in which they arose, and of the level of the development of the working class movement. It was true Korsch believed that Marx's own analysis on account of its method captured the essence of society far better than later theories. This did not mean it was a strict, static doctrine; the term, "Living Marxism," (which was later to become the title of a journal), is the most appropriate term for Korsch's Marxism. This is illustrated in the following statement from Korsch's Preface of Capital, 1859:

...that he (Marx) did not remotely intend to turn his new principle into a general philosophical theory of history that would be imposed from the outside upon the actual pattern of historical events. The same can be said of Marx's conception of history as he himself said of his theory of value; that it was not meant to be a dogmatic principle but merely an original and more

useful approach to the real, sensuous, practical world that presents itself to the active and reflective subject. 38

Korsch continued his work within this perspective. He criticized theories which maintained that Marxism was a 'blue-print of the future' or that there was a 'necessity in history.' He criticized organizations which transformed Marxism according to their own ends and he argued against the suggestion that Marx's principles were 'supra-historic.' He did not ignore these changes of Marxist theory, but tried to explain them. Korsch took exception to the abstract position of the general question: "Why are you a Marxist?" He believed it was of the variety: "Why do you believe in God, freedom, science, democracy, etc.", posed outside of any particular historical context.³⁹

He presents in his article, "Non-dogmatic Approach to Marxism," 1931, a number of approaches to Marxism which lead to dogmatic or static answers. They all ask the question: "What did Marx really mean?"; "What theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin or Stalin represent the most orthodox version of Marxist doctrine?"; and "Which method is truly the 'dialectical' method?"

Korsch describes these approaches as having petrified Marx's theory, a theory which he felt had never been developed in America. Thus he compiled a number of documents which he proposed would "revindicate" the critical element of Marxism, which would encourage the unfettered development of social science and show that 'dialectics' was not a 'super(supra)-

logic'.⁴⁰

He criticizes the view of 'objectivity' held by scientists, who implied thereby that they understood their methodology to be 'value-free' or 'neutral', (i.e. not attached to the interests of particular groups). Korsch argues that only when a theory recognizes its class interests can it be objective.⁴¹

The Marxist critique is important for its content. The Marxian theory did not constitute a positive materialistic philosophy nor a positivistic science, but rather a theoretical and practical critique of existing society. This must be understood in the comprehensive way it was used by the Left-Hegelians.⁴² By critique we mean, the examination of the categories as expressions of class content. It arose as the theoretical supplement during the last phase of the establishment of bourgeois society. Therefore their basic premises-a-priori contained the principles of the bourgeois class and the reaffirmation of existing society. Their analysis could not go beyond the description of society from that standpoint. Although Hegel was able to understand the importance of the revolt of the proletarian class, (a class created through the development of bourgeois society in England and France), even describing it as "not only a question of "misery" but a "social" question for modern society and solved by it", he called this new social class a "mob" and did not realize its positive revolutionary implications.⁴³

This is the new content with which Marx and Korsch began

their analysis. Their critique followed the logical conclusions of the classicists but only by rejecting the framework and incorporating into their analysis the development of the new class.

Base and Superstructure

An important aspect of Korsch's work is his understanding of the significance of the production relations which constitute the base of bourgeois society. This aspect did not originate with Korsch, but was reaffirmed by him as a fundamental element of Marx's theory. Accordingly, he states Marx's most important contributions to social research were in relating all phenomena of the process of human life to economics, not in the traditional academic sense as objects on the market, but conceived socially. Social phenomena are thus conceived of historically, being created by real, sensuous, practical activity by active and reflective social-subjects, although not necessarily consciously. This social process is the result of the development of the material forces of production and is realized in the struggle (development) of social classes as an active process.⁴⁴ Korsch explains that Marx contributed partially to an explanation of the relation between economics and politics and he referred the phenomena of the "mind" back to definite forms of social consciousness which pertain to a specific historical epoch.⁴⁵

To illuminate the importance of the base Korsch states:

The Critique of Political Economy as embodied in Capital deals with the State, and the law, and with such "higher", i.e. still more ideological (but not any less real), social phenomena as philosophy, art, and religion only in occasional remarks which light up, in sudden flashes, extensive fields of social activity; yet it remains a materialistic investigation of the whole of existing bourgeois society. It proceeds methodically from the view that when we have examined the bourgeois mode of production and its historical change we have thereby examined everything of the structure and development of present-day society which can be the subject-matter of a strictly empirical science. 46

According to this standpoint, a number of phenomena can not be 'scientifically' studied, only examined critically because of their increasing distance from the economic base. This does not mean they are any less 'real'.

Korsch states that the process by which capital is produced is discovered not in the 'accessory' forms of capital in circulation but in production.⁴⁷ This does not signify a disregard for the other spheres of social life, the apparently separate spheres form a totality. Production, distribution, exchange and consumption are not seen to be equal to each other, for production is primary, and the other spheres are moments of the totality.

Korsch attacks a common misunderstanding concerning this emphasis on the base - 'economism.' Economism is a static view of the economic base, in the sense that it is seen as the only 'reality.' Economics is conceived not in the social sense but as an object which creates the rest of society in a cause and effect, one-way fashion.

Other social phenomena (state, law, philosophy) are seen to be less real and even lost in 'pure ideology.'⁴⁸ This position is held by the anarchists and syndicalists, who in their practical struggles remained only in the realm of economics and neglected other spheres of life. (e.g. politics) Korsch did not include the German Social Democrats in this group, for he saw them fighting a wage-struggle within the framework of bourgeois production, even opposing the workers independent political action.⁴⁹ Korsch describes the group around Luxemburg as representing a direct struggle which was anti-parliamentary and anti-trade union. They helped found an international organization of the working class. Later, this group disintegrated with the ensuing stabilization of capitalistic conditions and its members were expelled from the Third International, "a process begun by Lenin."⁵⁰

Another tendency Korsch attacks is the so-called "sociological tendency."⁵¹ This group of theorists tried to supplement Marx's theory, which they described as 'one-sided.' (economically) They understood the importance of the production relation only in a static sense. They thought Marx emphasized economics to the neglect of other areas of social life. Therefore, they attached other areas on to the analysis by way of a "co-ordination" or "interaction" or "dialectical" effect. The various elements of social life were seen as "interdependent", like a feed-back system. Korsch states this had the effect of making a 'positive' science out of Marx's

materialism. The facts of history were no longer seen from the point of view of their specific relation to social production, but appeared as empiricist, all facts described in their own context (autonomy) and not connected in a totality.⁵² Instead of a critique of the whole capitalist mode of production, the theory was transformed into partial critiques of various separate aspects of the system, i.e. economics, law, education.

A last tendency Korsch criticizes is the "Millieu" theory which sets the legal relations equivalent to the economic relations. Korsch maintains that the production relations are primary and that the property relations are legal expressions of the production relations.

"Marx had been aware that the same economic basis by innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural conditions, race differences, external historical influences, etc., may appear in an unlimited range of variations and gradations which can only be understood by an analysis of those given empirical circumstances."⁵³

"Production encroaches over the other 'moments'. From it the whole process begins always anew."⁵⁴ The relations of production embody the activity of social-individuals to nature and to each other. Only if production is understood in this active or social sense can we understand the concept. The addition of 'inter-actions' Korsch claims is confusing for the understanding of the working of bourgeois society. The confusion is not eliminated by stating the economic condition is

decisive in the 'last instance.' "...the apparent "one-sidedness" adhering to the "laws" of social being, historical development, and practical action as formulated by Marx, in no way interferes with their practical and theoretical utility, nay more, that utility depends upon the "one-sidedness" of their theoretical formulation."⁵⁵

The question of "consciousness" or forms of thought as a separate problem is not addressed in Korsch's work because of the primacy of the production relations. It is evident by his work that he does not conceive of a "collective will" or "ideology" - a set of ideas floating above society as if they were superhuman and in turn, influencing behaviour. There can only be a consciousness of self or of social-being existing within each social individual. This again brings up the importance of conceiving the individual not as a static-being which then produces thought (Feuerbach), but as an individual who is the ensemble of specific social relations of which he or she can be consciousness. Korsch agreed with Marx that, "the philosophical "idea" generally and all other, even the most "universal" categories of thought exist only as given forms of a "social consciousness", temporary products of a continuous development, attributes of a definite historical epoch and of a definite economic order of society."⁵⁶

Therefore the law, state, philosophy can not be understood "autonomously, 'out of themselves' or "out of the so-called general development of the human mind,"⁵⁷ but are rooted in

the material conditions. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence which determines their consciousness."⁵⁸ This statement contains an important opposition to Feuerbach's naturalistic formula: "Thought comes from being, but being does not come from thought."⁵⁹

Korsch uses a phrase which could cause some confusion: "naturally grown form of society." This phrase does not denote society's evolution as a natural process. It is more clearly expressed in the concept: "unconscious social-laws." The "unconscious" (naturwüchsige) development is criticized by Korsch. It describes the development of a part of society which has not yet been subject to a conscious human-social action.

The concept, historical specificity must be applied to ideas. "What else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes its character as material production is changed? The ruling ideas of an age have ever been only the ideas of the ruling class."⁶⁰

Principle of Change

Korsch elaborates upon the principle of change. There are three categories concerning change which he develops. The first is the critique of other theories of change, the second is the importance of understanding primitive society and the third is the comprehension of the present system which dynamic-

ally-consists of antagonistic classes and the potential for future change.

Again the principle of historical specificity is applied to the so-called 'development of society.' This is found in Korsch's book, Karl Marx, (the principle of change) and in Three Essays on Marxism, 1937-8), "Leading Principles of Marxism", (the principle of revolutionary praxis). In fact, this is the reason Korsch criticizes the classical bourgeois economists: "Classical bourgeois economists concern themselves with existing bourgeois society. They ingenuously regard society's basic relationships as having the immutable character of a genuine natural law, and are for just this reason unable to become aware of any other than this actually given form of society."⁶¹

Therefore, Korsch claims that the Classical theorists when analyzing "society" could only describe other societal forms in terms of specifically bourgeois categories. The concepts which described the character of bourgeois society were read back into history. If they attempted to discuss 'primitive society' it was in terms of a 'pre-historic', 'preliminary stage' leading up to the apex of history, bourgeois society. Thus primitive society is represented as being organized along the same lines as bourgeois society, i.e. private property, state, family, commodities. Korsch states this applies to economists' conceptions of the future as well; "They simply cannot conceive of any changes other than those set forth in due sequence by a further unfolding of the fundamental principles

appearing in present-day bourgeois society. They regard all social revolutions as pathological interferences with "normal" social development."⁶²

Korsch agrees with Marx that primitive society has to be understood in terms of its own categories. Bourgeois society may furnish a "key" for an understanding of the past, (it can not be conceived of as just a "state of nature.") It must be understood in its own totality, as a different form of society.

The bourgeois conception of development is one of a gradual process or an evolution of the already existing society. Korsch does not deny evolution in terms of the development of the productive forces but he does not support a theory of a meta-physical 'evolving', divorced from actual class relations.

Korsch states Marx criticized Hegel for not acknowledging the reality of historical change. "Hegel said, concerning the real "purpose" of all historical action, that "it is already fulfilled in truth, and need not wait for us."⁶³ Korsch says this does not leave "room for the conscious human-social act."⁶⁴

Korsch's analysis of primitive communism in the section "the principle of criticism", in Karl Marx, will illuminate both the concepts of historical specificity and social change. The investigation of past societies, is not an attempt to discover a "really-communistic" state of society from which we have strayed. Rather it is to further the understanding of social change. Korsch does not accept the linear idea of

"progress" nor does he accept explanations of the past as "barbaric." He explains that the most important aspect of studying primitive society is to gain knowledge of a totally non-bourgeois society, making it possible to conceive of a fundamentally different type of society in the future.⁶⁵

There need be, in fact, as little structural likeness between those primaeval conditions of humanity (or for that matter the equally "primitive" conditions of the so-called savage" tribes of today) and the future conditions of a fully developed communist society, as there is at the present time between the "unconscious" elements of the mental structure of modern bourgeois man as recently disclosed by the psychoanalysts on the one hand, and the "corresponding" states of either primaeval man or the free individuals of a no longer bourgeois society of the future. 66

This critique of bourgeois society has as its basis an understanding of it as a transitory form of society.

Generalization, Being and Becoming

The question may arise, since Korsch emphasizes 'historical specificity', is there any degree of generalization possible? Korsch in accordance with Marx does not generalize categories of society in abstracto, and he avoids the "conceptless" method of the Historical School. Marx transformed Hegel's analysis, which regarded philosophy not as a mere reflection of external concrete facts in the mind of the philosopher, but as concrete in themselves, into a materialist standpoint. According to Hegel, the "truly general" is identical to the "particular", with individual existence, to put it in his own

words he believed that "Truth is concrete."⁶⁷ Marx did not set up a "general" concept of society opposed to the concrete reality. "Every general , conception necessarily remains a specific aspect or a mentally constructed part of the historical concrete of existing bourgeois society."⁶⁸ "The "concrete", i.e. the real, social, economic and class contents of existing society are confronted with their abstract conceptual form, and the as yet unformed substance of a new proletarian socialist and communist "becoming" was opposed to the fully determined forms of existing bourgeois "being". This is one of the "materialistic" tendencies of the new, revolutionary science of society."⁶⁹

Marx analyzed the specific form of society, thus arriving at a general knowledge of a social development transcending that specific form. The law of this particular society was discovered through the analysis of its change from another form. The specific law of bourgeois society is the law of social value and its fetish character. This concerns two general classes, the nonproducers and the producers and the relations of production and the forces of production.

Productive Forces and Production Relations

Korsch states that "change" is the only law of history. He understands the progressive potential of change to exist within the productive forces of bourgeois society. The productive forces are not conceived of as a concept of "matter" derived

from a materialist reversal of Hegel; but together with the production-relations they form a whole.⁷⁰ A productive-force is the real labor power of working men; "the force incorporated in these living human beings by which, with definite material means of production and within a definite form of social co-operation conditioned by those material means of production, they produce the material means of satisfying the social needs of their existence, that is under capitalistic conditions, "commodities".⁷¹ Korsch explains that bourgeois society has 'fixed' production-relations and "elastic" productive forces. The production-relations are now a fetter to the development of the productive-forces. What Korsch calls a "social mutation" or "leap" can occur in material production, but this is not determinable.⁷²

Korsch states that Marx shifted his analysis from an emphasis on the subjective class factor to the objective development in his later writings. Marx stated, 1859,

a formation of society never perishes before all the forces of production for which it is wide enough have developed, and that "new and higher production-relations never come into being before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the womb of the old society itself." 73

This shift corresponded to the recession of the proletarian movement and the continuance of the social value relation. Korsch adds: "The stronger emphasis now laid on the objective presuppositions of a victorious proletarian revolution which cannot be replaced by good will, by the right theory, or by the most efficient organization of revolutionaries, appears

from this point of view in the main the lesson drawn from the experiences of the European revolution and counter-revolution of 1848 for the benefit of the new phase of the revolutionary labour movement which began in 1850."⁷⁴

Similarly Lenin summed up the tactical experiences of the Russian Revolution as follows: "the fundamental law of revolution is the indispensable objective conditions of a "direct, open, really revolutionary struggle of the working class."⁷⁵ Lenin understood that the "pure" activistic revolutionary tendencies could not, in an objectively different situation adhere to the "slogans of the direct revolutionary situation released by the Great War."⁷⁶ Both of these sober views, Korsch conceded, did not signify a passive belief in a cosmic 'economic' process of development which eventually would lead to revolution.

The class which stands in the midstream of historical development and by its own movement determines that development, must by its conscious activity finally prove the maturity reached by the productive forces within the existing productive-relations. They must with their own hands break the fetters that obstruct the development of the productive forces and establish the higher production-relations of a new progressive epoch of society. 77

The method of research used by Korsch and Marx captures the flux of existing social relations, the reality of antagonism.

...it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking-up; it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary. 78

Footnotes

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3. Karl Korsch, Three Essays on Marxism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 15.
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5. Ibid., p. 23.
6. Ibid., p. 23 cited from footnote 34, Marx's letter to Engels 2/4/58, value as an historical abstraction.
7. Ibid., p. 23.
8. Ibid., pp. 68-70.
9. Karl Korsch, "The Marxist Dialectic", Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, (March 1923), 135-140.
10. Ibid., p. 135.
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12. Karl Korsch, "On Materialist Dialectic", Revolutionary Theory, (June 1924), 140-44.
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36. ~~Karl Korsch, Review of Vernon Venable's Human Nature: The Marxian View, Journal of Philosophy, Vol. 17, No. 26, (December 1945) p. 717.~~
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39. Karl Korsch "A Non-dogmatic Approach to Marxism" Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 274.
40. Ibid., pp. 274-276.
41. Ibid., p. 281.
42. Karl Korsch, "Why I am a Marxist" (April 1935) Three Essays on Marxism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) p. 65.

43. Karl Korsch, Karl Marx (New York: Russell and Russell, 1938) reissued in 1963, pp. 61-63.
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45. Ibid., p. 230. (my parentheses)
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47. Karl Korsch, "Leading Principles of Marxism: a Restatement" Oct/Nov. 1937 Three Essays on Marxism (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) p. 19.
48. Karl Korsch, Karl Marx (New York: Russell and Russell, 1938) p. 215.
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53. Ibid., p. 220 see Capital III, ii, p. 325.
54. Ibid., p. 221.
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58. Ibid., p. 189.
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72. Ibid., p. 209.
73. Ibid., p. 210.
74. Ibid., p. 212.
75. Ibid., p. 212.
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CHAPTER THREE
MARXISM AS IDEOLOGY
OR THE
HISTORY OF MARXISM

The logically and empirically unobjectionable clarification, sharpening and further development of these (dialectical 'contradictions') and a great many other concepts employed in the dialectic to the present time without being thoroly (sic) tested and frequently only as slogans is an indispensable condition that the contemporary socialist theory stemming from Marx shall not degenerate to an unclear mixture of backward psuedo-science, mythology and in the last analysis reactionary ideology, but shall remain as well equipped in the future for fulfilling its great progressive task in the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat as it actually was in the times of Marx and Engels through forming a critical connection with the then highest, achievements of bourgeois philosophy and science. 1

This chapter examines Korsch's critiques of various Marxist theories. The analysis which follows demonstrates how Marxism has developed into a reactionary ideology, no longer bearing any relation to the actual movement of the international proletariat. This can be shown by examining Korsch's exposition of the history of Marxist theory. This history is twofold, being both the active movement and the forms of social consciousness. A major point to be made is that the 'Marxist' theories he analyzes never go beyond a bourgeois methodological standpoint, and this includes aspects of Marx's own theory. They are also bound by the historical context within which they arise and they carry with them the limitations of the theory associated with the 'Great Jacobinic Revolution.'

The importance of method is embedded in each of Korsch's critiques, for the method of a theory should be able to capture

in thought and words the changing nature of social existence. Every theory implies assumptions about the 'nature of the individual and society', thus attributing certain relations to them. The relations and concepts in the previous chapter will be the basis for a comparison of the theories Korsch analyzes. It has been shown that a method should contain a form which corresponds to its content, a unified movement and theory. This aspect became disjointed. Thus Marxism's 'dynamic' quality as a progressive theory was lost and instead it was accepted formally by various political groups. This process was achieved in part with the extraction of only segments from the 'whole' theory to suit immediate goals of the groups. It is argued that the 'Marxist' theory was taken up dogmatically, statically, non-dialectically, a-historically, non-socially, and positing the 'political sphere' as primary. The superstructure was taken up either as a non-reality or as existing independently of the socio-historical movement. Thus bourgeois culture and forms of consciousness (philosophy, religion etc.) were simply rejected by some groups, as being harmful to proletarian struggle. If the interrelation between theory and movement is broken it follows that the interrelation between subject and object is transformed into a dualistic relation in theory. This affects the methodological assumptions which then hinders a theory's ability to comprehend the changes of society. In other words, the relation between social-being and its consciousness is juxtaposed as two separate entities standing opposed

to one another.

The chapter begins with an explication of Korsch's analysis of the origin of Marx's theory. It continues with his critique of the Marxists of the Second International, who took an anti-philosophical stance. The analysis of Lenin and Luxemburg follows. They attempted a 'restoration' of the original Marxist theory from the previous 'distortions' by the theorists of the Second International. Actually, Lenin and Luxemburg had, at the basis of their theories, a 'Marxist-philosophy-as-such.' The Bernstein theory will be shown to have been the expression of the real movement of history. Korsch's criticisms of the American Workers Party and the English Labor Party will serve as further examples of Marxism as ideology. The arguments are similar to those foregoing theories. In addition, the article on the American Workers Party deals specifically with a misunderstanding of the 'productive base.' An examination of Korsch's relation to the Frankfurt School and his critique of sociology follows. Lastly, his own position is brought forth.

The following chapter shows the limitations of the approach to 'Marxism' which attempts to be either a 'pure' theory or a 'pure' practice. In accordance with Korsch, it is argued that only a dialectical understanding of the relation of theory and the movement of the proletariat and of the subject/object relation provides a clear understanding of history. In

essence, Korsch's reopening of the relation between consciousness and superstructure and active-social beings (proletariat) still needs clarification. This includes the re-examination of Hegel's idealism in relation to Marx's materialism and the corresponding movements of which they were the expressions. Theories are developed within particular historical contexts and they must be understood in this way. Theories cannot be 'superimposed' on to history, rather history is expressed in theory. A revolutionary theory should reflect the actual historical movement, which at this time constitutes movement of overcoming of the relations of commodity production and capital.

The changes in Marxist theory or the development of Marxism as an ideology corresponded to changes in the historical movement itself and to the groups who took up Marxism as their theory.

Marxism as an ideology means that theory is viewed as having a separate existence 'above' the real social relations of society - in the realm of 'pure thought'. Instead of being intricately related to the existing reality of class struggle, it is a false-consciousness, reified and made into a static set of objective laws which in turn are imputed to reality. Thus the theory no longer serves as the expression of the social revolution but lends an autonomous character to partial phenomena of social life, e.g. the State, law, philosophy, in theory.

Critique of the Second International

Korsch studied the different phases of Marxist theory since its inception. He concluded that there was a 'crisis', not only within the Marxist movements but within Marx's own theory as well. The first version of Marx's theory, down to 1848, was one of revolution by the proletariat comprehended and practiced as a 'living totality'. This was expressed in the Manifesto of the Communist Party. This form of Marxism changed during the second half of the nineteenth century when there was no longer a generally revolutionary movement. The scientific socialism of Capital, 1867-94, expressed a more developed theory of the Manifesto. It included further analysis of the various components of the social totality, including all branches of 'knowledge' and spheres of social life. Forms of social consciousness, even in these later writings were understood dialectically with the 'flow of the historical movement'. It still captured, in theoretical form only, the 'secret' of a 'social revolution', not just a political revolution.²

Korsch explains that by 1850 the first great cycle in the historical development of capitalism came to an end. At that time, "Capitalism had completed all stages of its development to the point where the class-conscious section of the proletariat was in a position to place social revolution on the historical agenda."³ This movement was expressed in early utopian socialists' theories. Marx and Engels criticized the existing class society from this newly emerging proletarian

perspective. They incorporated this new class consciousness into their analysis, but they drew upon the achievements of bourgeois science as well, in order to conceptualize "for the proletarian class the real developmental laws of the existing capitalist society and hence, at the same time, the real conditions for revolutionary class action."⁴ After 1850 capitalism began a new historical cycle, and the proletariat could no longer borrow directly from Marx's original theory under these changed conditions. A period of crisis and depression was ushered in during the 1870's creating a conducive atmosphere for the development of class consciousness. However the working class took up Marxism in a purely formal way. The European workers movement in the second half of the nineteenth century understood the theory purely abstractly and passively. It was viewed as a set of external laws determining the objective course of history, unlike the earlier theory which had developed in a revolutionary period as part of the expression of the subjective action of a class, which "criticizes in theory and overthrows in practice the false illusions and transient appearances of all existing social relationships."⁵ Thus the original Marxist theory, which was the expression of the real historical struggle of the time, later became separated from the changing historical movement by the groups which took it up without incorporating these changes in the theory. As Korsch states:

Marxist economy was originally formulated as a radical critique of bourgeois political economy, a critique which was to have found both theoretical and practical culmination in a real revolution. This original schema was later changed by Marx and altered even more by Engel's. Today the apologists for as well as the critics of Marxism view Marxist economics as little more than a scientific system in which all economic phenomena of bourgeois society are deduced theoretically from an uncritical, axiomatic concept of "value". Marx's revolutionary critique of political economy aimed at the theoretical and practical sublation (Aufhebung) of fetishism. But fetishism has become the idol of Marxist scientific economists and a thorn in the side of bourgeois and reformist critics of Marxism. 6

Marxism was taken up as a mere ideology, no longer developing/evolving as the expression of the changing practical struggle of the proletariat. It eventually became an ideological justification for the state. This transformation of the relation of theory and movement cannot be explained away as a perversion or oversimplification of Marx and Engel's original theory by their followers. Korsch was not an advocate of returning to Marx's 'original' theory. Rather he explained that the Marxism of the late nineteenth century was a product of earlier historical conditions which differed from the new situation. This is where Korsch explains the "genesis" of the separation of theory from proletariat movement. For the theory that emerged later was no longer, "the general expression of existing class struggles."⁷ The changed conditions of the new capitalist epoch and of the proletariat movement after 1850 had prevented the "further development of a living Marxist theory within the unfolding praxis of the workers' movement."⁸

The first group of Marxists that Korsch looked at were

the Marxist theoreticians of the Second International, 1889-1914. His major critique is found in Marxism and Philosophy, 1923. With this book, Korsch reaffirmed the importance of Hegel's dialectic. At the time he supported the Leninist faction and proletarian struggle against other Marxist tendencies and against the bourgeoisie as well. Korsch argued that the relation between Marxism and philosophy posed both theoretical and practical problems, but that the Marxists at that time either disregarded the philosophical side of the theory or reverted back to a purely philosophical stance. They had considered the epistemological and methodological basis of theories a waste of time and irrelevant to the practice of proletarian class struggle. This made it possible for a Marxist theoretician to be a follower of Schopenhauer in his private life.⁹ The Marxists of the Second International believed that the neglect of a philosophical base was a positive development for Marxist theory. Korsch argued that the above conception of the relation between Marxism and philosophy was a superficial and negative one. He claimed that the Marxists of the Second International had neglected the original meaning of the dialectical principle that Marx and Engel's transferred from German Idealist Philosophy to materialist philosophy. Korsch argued that the Marxists of the Second International understood the development of theory solely in terms of the 'history of ideas.' This is a purely idealist understanding of consciousness, in the form of the development of philosophy as a mere chain of

ideas. Korsch argued that it is necessary to discover the connection between the 'intellectual movement and the revolutionary movement.' As Hegel stated, 'every philosophy is its' own epoch comprehended in thought.' The decline of Hegel's dialectical philosophy corresponded to the decline of the revolutionary social practice of the bourgeoisie and the change in social consciousness and movement was an expression of one unified historical process. The emergence of Marxism was the other side of the proletarian movement, as its conscious theoretical expression; taken together they constitute the totality of the historical process. Marxism developed from the Hegelian system but not as a mere 'verbal dispute giving a new name to Hegel's philosophy.'¹⁰ The Marxists of the Second International acted as though this relation was immaterial to the practice of class struggle. Korsch disagreed and saw their neglect of this matter interrelated with their neglect of 'problems of revolution,' in particular those involving the abolition of the state. The question of the state had not been posed practically since the suppression of the Paris commune in 1871. It was again presented as a practical problem during the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet the various Marxist groups had no consensus on this issue nor on those concerning questions of transition and goals.

Korsch did not see theory as 'pure thought', unattached from real social processes. His view was opposed to the interpretation of theory by the Marxists of the Second International.

It became a "purely scientific observation without any immediate connection to the political or other practices of class struggle,"¹¹ as represented by Hilferding. Social phenomena were inserted into a theoretical system with static causal connections between parts of the theory, free of value judgments and not necessarily implying 'socialism.' A theory which once had captured the historical movement was transformed into only partial criticisms of existing bourgeois society. If the theory of the social totality is made static, it no longer leads to a critique of the whole of bourgeois society and limits the theory to a comprehension only of reforms of bourgeois society and not to the total transformation of social relations. Korsch claimed that the Marxism of the Second International was revolutionary purely in form, and with the outbreak of the World War the theory collapsed. With the development of social revolutionary struggles in both Germany and Russia after the war, Marxist theory altered its form again.

It was presented by Lenin and Luxemburg, in part as a response to the 'degenerated' theory and practice of the Social Democrats. The new theory proclaimed itself to be a 'restoration' of the original Marxism. At this time Korsch conceded that Lenin had reestablished the internal connection of theory and proletarian struggle. Quoting Lenin's famous phrase: "It is more pleasant and more useful to live through a revolution than to write about it."¹², Korsch viewed the examination of the relation of Marxism and philosophy as part of this restoration.

Some of the Marxists of the time were categorized by Korsch as vulgar Marxists, because they saw no relation between the scientific socialism of Marx and German idealism. In their analysis philosophical ideas were seen as vacuous, unreal fantasies; opposed to this view Marx, Engels and Korsch argued that, 'philosophy does not stand outside the world.'¹³ Korsch stated that the anarcho-syndicalists had never seen intellectual life and forms of social consciousness as a 'reality' or if 'real' less so than the 'economic sphere.' Instead they were explained away as pseudo-realities (such as religion) existing only in the 'minds of ideologues - as error, imagination and illusion, devoid of a genuine object.'¹⁴ Korsch pointed out that forms of consciousness are realities and are not negated by simply ignoring them.

Korsch's evaluation of the theorists of the Second International revolved around the issue of the neglect of vital political, revolutionary, transitional problems of the times. The neglect stemmed partly from their view of the superstructure as a totally abstract relation, as one term of a 'metaphysical dualism.' This meant that forms of social consciousness were conceived as a reflection of the, "one really concrete and material developmental process, on which it is completely dependent (even if relatively independent still dependent in the last instance.)"¹⁵ They did not dismiss the superstructure as a non-reality as the Anarcho-syndicalists. The higher ideological spheres such as religion and philosophy were seen in correspondence

to no real object. The 'more real' ideological spheres such as the political and legal forms were said to correspond to something 'real' - institutions of Law and State. Korsch summarizes the above by stating that for these Marxists, "there are three degrees of reality: 1) the economy, which in the last instance is the only objective and totally non-ideological reality; 2) Law and the State, which are already somewhat less real because clad in ideology and 3) pure ideology which is objectless and totally unreal ('pure rubbish').¹⁶

Korsch argued that Marx and Engels had never reduced the relationship of consciousness to its object in the aforementioned manner. Forms of social consciousness of intellectual life were not denoted as free-floating irrelevant 'ideology.' Forms of consciousness were real, although in part they were 'false consciousness', 'unconsciousness', or 'ideology', (but not in the same sense as the above.) Thus, the state was viewed as an independent force, above society, and 'partial phenomena of social life were attributed with an autonomous character' by the Marxists of the Second International.¹⁷

Korsch stated that Marx pointed out in the Preface of the Critique of Political Economy the philosophical and methodological foundations for this relation.

...within the complex of material relations that Hegel called Civil Society, the social relations of production - the economic structure of society - forms the real foundation on which arises juridical and political superstructures and to which determinate forms of social consciousness correspond. In particular, these forms of social consciousness which are no less real than Law and the State, include commodity

fetishism, the concept value, and the other economic representations derived from them. 18

These forms cannot be understood out of themselves, as if autonomous nor can they be derived from the general development of the mind, spirit or reason; they are rooted in the material/social relations of existence, the base of which is one aspect, and yet it is the foundation of the total social organization.

Korsch pointed out that the major weakness of the Marxists of the Second International was their 'naive realism' in which both common sense and normal positivist science of bourgeois society draw a sharp line between consciousness and its object.¹⁹ This distinction had been superceded in the dialectical philosophy of Hegel and it was taken up in a more concrete way by Marx. The theorists of the second International considered this aspect of Hegel's philosophy to be a 'mystification', and thus eliminated it from their analysis.

Korsch demonstrated that even in Marx and Engel's early period they did not have a 'dualistic metaphysical conception of the relationship of consciousness to reality.'²⁰ For them the coincidence of social-subjective consciousness and social-objective-existence characterized every dialectic. It followed that the material relations of production were maintained in combination with the forms of existing social consciousness. Korsch stated that "...without this coincidence of consciousness and reality, a critique of political economy could never have become the major component of a theory of social revolution."²¹

This undialectical method juxtaposed thought, observation perception and comprehension of an immediately given reality to this reality, as if the former (thoughts) were themselves also immediately given independent essences.²² Here thought is opposed to Being and Nature, as three autonomously given entities rather than a moment of one dialectical socio-historical relation. Thought is considered independently of social being, truth is explained as the "correspondence of thought to an object that is external to it and 'mirrored' by it."²² This standpoint maintained that forms of scientific and unscientific economic consciousness have an objective meaning because they correspond to a reality, the material relations of production which they comprehend, while other forms of consciousness are objectless fantasies. Korsch disagreed and stated that economic ideas only appear to be related to material relations in the "way an image is related to the object it reflects."²⁴ The economic ideas are expressions of the indirect social-relation existing between individuals in the process of production. But they had counterposed 'objects' to 'perceptions-representations' and Korsch saw this as a return to a bourgeois conception of consciousness in this theory of correspondence. "Bourgeois consciousness necessarily sees itself apart from the world and independent of it as critical philosophy and impartial science, just as the bourgeois State and bourgeois law appear to be above society. This consciousness must be philosophically

fought by the revolutionary materialistic dialectic which is the philosophy of the working class."²⁵

Critique of Hilferding

The representatives of the Austro-Marxists which Korsch primarily considers are Rudolph Hilferding and (briefly) Otto Bauer. The period immediately following World War I was a time of experimentation with socialization. At the time Korsch supported Bauer's idea of 'economic self-government of autonomous associations' because it opposed both the state socialist and centralist tendencies. The theory of autonomous associations eventually turned into social reformism, which believed that socialization could be accomplished through the Social Democratic government. Korsch argued: "Only when from scientific knowledge we deeply grasped the impossibility, the completely illusory character, of that seemingly so 'realistic' connection of a capitalistic production policy with socialistic distribution policy can we become practical socialists."²⁶

This view of socialization eliminated the subjectivity or consciousness of the producers. It was a variant of scientific socialism which posited a reified, set of laws which supposedly determined economic development, and it bore no necessary connection to class struggle. Instead, economic aspects of the most recent development of capital were inserted into a theoretical system of causal connections. Hilferding

stated, "Knowledge of the laws governing a society of commodity production reveals at once the determinants of the will of the classes of this society. For a Marxist, the task of scientific politics - a politics which describes causal connection - is to discover these determinants of the will of classes. Marxist politics, like Marxist theory, is free of value-judgements. It is therefore false to simply identify Marxism with socialism, although it is very common for Marxists and non-Marxists to do so. Logically, Marxism, seen only as a scientific system and therefore apart from its historical effects, is only a theory of the laws of motion of society, which the Marxist conception of history formulated in general, while Marxist economics has applied it to the age of commodity production."²⁷

Hilferding subscribed to the thesis of capitalist stability. This thesis proclaimed capitalism was crisis free ~~and able to overcome any dislocations.~~ Korsch claimed this thesis stood opposed to a series of actual crisis and it reduced socialism to a moral demand or reformist practice. The argument was first set up by Bernstein and continued by Hilferding, and Korsch termed this stance 'subjectivist.' The overcoming of the crisis was to be carried out by a "capitalist general cartel." This was to be approved by the working class which would carry through the planned regulation of bourgeois production, based on the relations of wage-labor and capital. Hilferding argued against the theory of the intrinsic economic

collapse of capitalism, yet his own thesis was maintained in light of the existing capitalist reality of crisis. Korsch argued that this was due to his analysis which was an ideological reflection of the phase of the movement of capitalist economy just past. It was then applied as a fixed, rigid theory to the present situation.

Hilferding's thesis of "Finance Capital" (1910) held to the notion that money-lenders capital had become the determining factor in the society. It signified the concentration of capital, the fusion of private and state-controlled bank capital with trust and state-controlled industrial capital. He believed there was a growing tendency for all control to end in one hand. Korsch agreed that money lenders capital played an important role, but that previous forms such as trading and money lenders capital were being transformed into mere accessories of a new form.²⁸

Korsch maintained that the overthrow of capital and wage labor could only be accomplished through the conscious deed of the producers. He viewed Hilferding's analysis as a departure from the whole premises of Marx's materialism; Korsch considered it to be a type of abstract sociology. First, Korsch maintained that socialization could only take place through the process of production not through the political form. Secondly, since the Marxist theory is precisely an expression of history, how can the "laws of motion of a society" be separated from history? Marx did not advocate general, universal laws, but historically specific, social laws.

Socialism is implied as a tendency, as a practical social solution to the problems facing modern society; it is not an individual moral opinion, not a necessity, or an iron law, which is effected without the conscious implementation of it by the producers. In opposition to Hilferding, Korsch always maintained that the "secret", not only of

... "how capital produces" but also of "how capital is produced" - and incidently the key to the abolition of all capitalistic exploitation and wage slavery - can in no way be discovered through the analysis of the functions performed by those "accessory" forms of capital in the process of circulation or of revenue which accrue to the capitalist concerned, in consideration of the "services," performed in that sphere. "One will therefore understand," says Marx, "why in our analysis of the basic form of capital, of the form in which it determines the economic organization of modern society, its popular, and, as it were, antediluvian forms, 'trading capital' and 'userers' capital, for the present (viz.,) in the analysis of the actual process of the capitalistic production in the first book of Capital are entirely ignored. 29

Philosophy - as such

Critique of Lenin and Luxemburg

The philosophical fight of ideas is, from a proletarian point of view, not the basis but just a transitory ideological form of the revolutionary class struggle determining the historical development of our time. 30

Korsch came to criticize Leninism as well as the Social Democrats. The reception accorded his book, Marxism and Philosophy was the same by both parties - negative. He wrote a reply to the criticisms in 1930, The Present State of the Problem of 'Marxism and Philosophy' An Anti-Critique. Along

with the above criticisms bourgeois scholars extracted parts of his book to suit their own standpoint. One example concerned the point that 'intellectual life was a reality.' They had neglected to see that Korsch was criticizing those realities by foreseeing their transcendence through socialization.

This section deals with the Marxists who wanted to 'restore' the original Marxist doctrine, and it includes Korsch's analysis of both Lenin and Luxemburg. They wanted to save the Marxist doctrine from the 'falsifications' of the Marxists of the Second International. Korsch saw both the Social Democratic and the Communist positions in the same light. Korsch categorized Leninism along with the old Marxist orthodoxy, both being opposed to other progressive theoretical tendencies in the movement at that time. The criticisms made of his theory were not addressed to his major point on the periodization of Marxist theory. (Korsch's application of the ~~materialist conception of history to the materialist conception~~ of history itself.) Rather, they were made on the conception of Marxism which was the underlying basis of the book. This included the conception of the relation between consciousness and social being.

Korsch was accused of supporting the 'primitive' form of Marxism and ignoring the developments of the theory by the Second International. He was charged with presenting the Marxism after 1850 in a state of purely a negative, unilinear decay. Korsch disagreed with this assessment and he restated

that Marxism itself was an historical product. Therefore it changed with changed conditions. He argued against the Leninists and Luxemburgists who criticized other Marxist theories for deviating from the pure theoretical principles of Marxism. Korsch termed this as the making of 'dogmatic calculations'. Korsch was concerned with the historical accuracy of the theory of Marxism and its 'phases', and not with the dogmatic defence of whether a theory was 'really Marxist.' Korsch argued that Lenin's theory was based on a 'philosophy - as such.' This began with the return to Hegel by Labriola in Italy and by Plekhanov in Russia. Lenin was a student of Plekhanov. Korsch saw the abandonment of the direct relation between theory and proletarian struggle by both the old Marxist orthodoxy and the Communists. Korsch demonstrated this by showing that both Kautsky and Lenin adopted Marxism as a form of consciousness to be brought to the workers 'from outside' by bourgeois intellectuals who allied themselves with the workers movement. Kautsky stated to the Vienna Party Congress that socialism was based on modern economic conditions as was the struggle of the proletariat, both arising parallel to each other, but not out of each other. Kautsky stated;

Modern socialist consciousness can only arise on the basis of profound scientific understanding and modern economic knowledge is in fact as much a pre-condition for socialist production as is modern technology. But with the best will in the world the proletariat can create neither one nor the other; both arise out of the contemporary social process. However the bearer of science is not the proletariat but the bourgeois intelligentsia. Modern socialism first emerged

among certain members of this group and through them was first conveyed to the intellectually advanced proletarians. They then introduced it into class struggle, where conditions permitted. Socialist consciousness is therefore something that is brought into proletarian struggle from the outside and not something that grew naturally from within it. The old Hainfield Programme was therefore quite right to say that it was the task of Social Democracy to introduce the proletariat to the consciousness of their conditions and of their tasks. That would not be necessary if this consciousness could emerge spontaneously from class struggle. 31

Korsch then placed this statement beside one made by Lenin a year later in 1902. Lenin continued Kautsky's 'key points' in What is to be Done? and concluded that 'one cannot talk of an autonomous ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the course of their movement.' This position is expressed in Lenin's statement that:

The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade-union consciousness i.e. the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however grew out of the philosophical historical and economic theories elaborated by the educated representations of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. 32

This standpoint was also represented by Rosa Luxemburg who spoke of the 'stagnation' of Marxism and contrasted Marx with the proletariat... "the one had creative power because he was armed with all the resources of a bourgeois education, while the other remains tied to 'the social conditions of existence in our society.'" ³³

Korsch's position was the opposite of the above; he understood that it was just these social conditions which allowed the creation of a theoretical expression of proletarian class struggle in the first place. It was the social-material existence of the proletariat and its real life struggle which created the self-social-class consciousness which in turn was captured in Marx's theory. Korsch provided an historical example to prove the above interpretation of the relation of theory to the movement. The workers movement of the Second International adopted Marxism as its ideology. The movement rested on a broader basis than the previous class struggle which took place at the end of the first capitalist cycle, 1850, which corresponded to the peak of the workers movement. This movement had been revolutionary whereas the latter movement was primarily of a reformist character, and it took up the earlier theory as an abstract canon. Marx' and Engel's theory stood in a direct relation to this revolutionary movement. When the revolutionary movement subsided they no longer focused upon the immediate political questions but undertook a detailed and profound study of social and economic conditions and relations.

Whereas the Social Democrats were opposed to philosophy, the Leninist theory was based on a philosophy - as-such.' Korsch's book was attacked by the Party in Russia in 1923. Korsch claimed it was due to the leadership of the Party who used the slogan of 'propagating Lenin' to Bolshevize the

ideology of all non-Russian Parties that belonged to the Communist International. "This coincided with a sharpening of the struggle among Lenin's successors for the legacy of Leninism (which had begun during his lifetime) and with the events of October and November 1923 in Germany which constituted a major defeat for the political practice of international Communism in the West."³⁴ Korsch saw the 'Bolshevized' ideology as a philosophical ideology that claimed to restore the true unfalsified philosophy of Marx and on that basis fought other philosophical tendencies encountered in the movement.³⁵ This tendency moved West and encountered both Lukács' and Korsch's critical Marxism. The antagonistic philosophical tendencies within the Communist International surfaced. They led to the first direct philosophical discussions between the representatives of the tendencies which constituted the movement. They had been artificially united in the Communist International, but the basic philosophical disagreements had not been brought forth. Until that time, only 'political' and tactical questions were dealt with. Korsch's position was that the philosophical and practical aspects could not be separated.

This philosophical dispute of 1924 pitted the 'canonized' Leninist interpretation of Marx and Engels against the views represented by Korsch and Lukács. The latter's work was described as an idealist deviation from the official Soviet view. The main attack was directed against Korsch's view of

the dialectical relation between consciousness and its object, his rejection of common sense, 'positivist science' and a 'vulgar marxism' which had no philosophical perspective. Korsch continued his earlier critique of the Second International theorists who treated consciousness as something given, contrasting it to Being and Nature. Korsch did not explain in detail this relation in Marxism and Philosophy because he thought it was 'self-evident' to revolutionary Marxists. He discovered that it was just this 'primitive and predialectical and even pre-transcendental conception of the relation between consciousness and being' which was defended by Moscow.³⁶ This view was the foundation of Marxist-Leninist theory. The response to Korsch included what he termed the ABC of Marxist philosophy. It stated "...truth is defined as the agreement of a representation with the objects that are external to it." In other words, it understood "truth as the agreement of a representation with an object that exists outside it and is "reflected" by it."³⁷

At this point Korsch was forced to consider the original Leninist philosophy. Lenin had not based his philosophy on any theoretical formulation other than what he defended as being practically and politically beneficial to the revolution. He opposed 'harmful' systems of thought (Kant, Mach, other idealists). Thus Lenin's stance insured that the practical work of the Party would not be impaired. Lenin held to a view of a pure theory contrasted to a pure practice, as if theory stood outside

of the historical movement. All theoretical issues had been subordinated to party interest. As Lenin stated in the name of Bolshevik Social Democracy, in Die Neue Zeit, 1908, "This philosophical dispute (i.e. "the question of whether Marxist epistemology agrees with Spinoza and Holbach, or with Mach and Avenarius") is not in fact an issue of inner party dispute and, in the opinion of the editors, it should not become so. Any attempt to construe these differences of opinion as the distinctive marks of the factions within the party is basically misguided. Among both factional groups there are supporters as well as opponents of Mach and Avenarius."³⁸

Lenin struggled against both Kantianism which influenced the revisionist tendency and Machian 'empirio-criticism' which influenced the centrist tendency. He did not do this by philosophical argument but stated that they were, "ideologies incorrect from the standpoint of party work."³⁹ Lenin maintained that he was saving the materialist philosophy from the distortions of the Second International. The new historical situation called for the defense of the 'basic truths of philosophical materialism' which was opposed to bourgeois theories. He said, "These truths must be deliberately linked to the revolutionary bourgeois materialism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and spread among the millions and millions of peasants and other backward masses throughout Russia, Asia and the whole world."⁴⁰

Lenin's concern was purely 'political'. Theory was

judged on the basis of its political utility for the oppressed classes in countries where capitalism was not fully developed. This position had been criticized in a different form in Korsch's book, Marxism and Philosophy. Korsch stated that Marx had criticized this stance of the 'practically-oriented political party which imagines that it can supersede philosophy (in practice) without realizing it. (in theory).'⁴¹ In other words, Lenin pronounced upon philosophical questions strictly on the basis of non-theoretical considerations. This was the mistake of the practically oriented German party which thought that by ignoring philosophy it was negated. Korsch argued against Lenin's view that there had been an historical intellectual trend of idealist dialectics which excluded materialism. Korsch argued that the tradition of historical materialism was not inspired by dialectical idealism, but by a materialist outlook colored by natural science.⁴²

These differences with Lenin Korsch attributed not so much error in Lenin's thinking, as to the 'material roots' of the economic-social situation of Russia. Korsch concluded that this Leninist theory could not answer the practical needs of the international class struggle.⁴³

Korsch further concluded that Lenin's philosophy was really Hegelian while trying to be materialist. This stemmed from his view of the relation between Marx and Engel's theory and that of Hegel's. Lenin's view was the product of an exchange; the 'idealist' outlook was replaced by a 'materialist' outlook.

One philosophical system was replaced by another, which was no longer idealist. Korsch argued that this was only a terminological change, where the Absolute 'Spirit' was changed to 'matter.' He differed from Lenin and described the latter's 'materialist inversion' as a method which had regressed to a stage which German Idealism had already superceded. Korsch affirmed this as follows:

The dissolution of the metaphysical systems of Leibniz and Wolff began with Kant's transcendental philosophy and ended with Hegel's dialectic. Thereafter the 'Absolute' was definitively excluded from the being of both 'spirit' and 'matter', and was transferred into the dialectical movement of the 'idea'. The materialist inversion by Marx and Engels of Hegel's idealist dialectic merely consisted in freeing this dialectic from its final mystifying shell. The real movement of history was discovered beneath the dialectical 'self-movement of the idea', and this revolutionary movement of history was proclaimed to be the only 'Absolute' remaining. 44

Korsch carried this further to show that Lenin's philosophy was based on static entities or 'absolute polarities' of 'thought', 'being', 'spirit', and 'matter'. These had been the foundation of philosophies during the Enlightenment. Lenin's materialism was based on the idea of Being which is absolute and given, thus it gave up the dialectical relation between consciousness and social being. The perception of the individual as a social, reflective, object, as a dynamic entity was lost in theory. The dialectic was turned into a fixed opposition among three separate entities, Object, Nature, and History. Knowledge or thought was then presented "merely as the passive mirror and reflection of this objective Being in

the subjective Consciousness." Korsch differed with Lenin, for he believed that if the interrelation of being and consciousness was neglected, it then followed that the interrelation of theory and proletarian movement was also lost in the theoretical comprehension of history.⁴⁵ Not only was the relation between object and consciousness of one individual lost but the relationship between the totality of historical being and all historically prevalent forms of consciousness is neglected.⁴⁶ Instead this relation was reduced to the 'relationship of the subject and object of 'knowledge.' Knowledge was seen as an evolutionary linear progression towards Truth. Thus, Marx's historical, dialectical materialism was transferred to the realm of pure theory which discovers truth, and a pure practice which applies these truths to reality. Lenin's theory thus presented these relationships as a non-dialectical dualism, 'comparable to that of the most typical bourgeois idealists.'⁴⁷ ~~Therefore knowledge was not seen as~~ a socio-historical form of consciousness, as part of the superstructure, but was analyzed from an abstract epistemological standpoint. As we noted in the previous discussion on the Marxist dialectic, method and content are inseparable, and 'form has no value if its not the form of its content.' This makes it impossible to contrast the 'method' with the results by applying it in philosophy and science. Instead of incorporating the 'conscious dialectic' into theory, making it no longer necessary to have a 'philosophy-as-such', Lenin defended

the 'materialist' position and accused others of 'philosophical deviation.' It enveloped all the sciences, culture, politics and became an 'ideological dictatorship.'⁴⁸

Korsch argued that both Russian and German Marxism, were ideologies but neither was the ideology of the proletarian movement. In fact, Korsch pointed out that Kautsky and Russian Marxism during 1905 had been in theoretical agreement.

Critique of Kautsky

Korsch was accused of presenting post 1850 Marxism as a decay of the original doctrine, as a negative, linear **movement**, as a purely idealistic process rather than, as an historical product undergoing transformations dependent upon the movement of history itself. Korsch claimed this was his accusers' own misconception. It is true that Korsch did not agree with the Marxists of the Second International who claimed to have contributed to the advancement of Marxist theory, as though it existed in the realm of pure ideas. Korsch saw this as a dogmatic defence of the "orthodox thesis that the theory of the Second International was basically Marxist all along (according to Kautsky) or at least any rate until the 'original sin' of 4 of August 1914 (according to the Communists)."⁴⁹

Korsch argues that Kautsky represents the most orthodox position. Kautsky was instrumental in transforming Marxist theory of socialization into a theory of 'evolution' valid for non-revolutionary periods. In his work The Materialist

Conception of History the connection between theory and the social process is eliminated.⁵⁰

This is the point of convergence for both the Communists and the Social Democrats. For instance, the Communist Bammel, at the time, defended the Second International in the name of Lenin against Korsch's 'obscure' account. Bammel covers himself, by quoting from Lenin, out of context, "in standard scholastic fashion",⁵¹ where Lenin once acknowledged the historical achievements of the Second International in the working class movement.

Korsch also suggests that the usually accepted relation of Kautsky's Marxism and Bernstein's revisionism should be reversed. Instead of regarding the changes in Marxist theory as an advance added on to the original theory as a chain of ideas, Korsch stated these were, "new historical form(s) of proletarian class theory, which emerged from the altered practical context of the class struggle in a new historical epoch."⁵²

These changes cannot be understood correctly as either a positive development or as a formal stagnation or decay of a theory - as such. Kautsky had suggested that Marxism had been superceded by the workers movement. The SPD became a Marxist party with its acceptance of the Erfurt Programme in 1891. The revolutionary theory diverged from the reformist political policies. The theory had only been accepted formally, as an ideology in a pre-established form. It was not a true theory being 'nothing

other than a general expression of the real historical movement.' In fact Marx and Engel's own theory progressed towards a higher level after the revolutionary movement died down. It was not directly related to the reformist character of the movement, but remained a more developed theory of the underlying social relations.

The History of the Marxist Ideology in Russia

Unlike Western Europe-where the Marxist theory arose in a period when the bourgeois revolution was already approaching its close and Marxism expressed a real and actualized tendency to pass beyond the goals of the bourgeois revolutionary movement the tendency of the proletarian class-Marxism in Russia was from the beginning nothing more than an ideological form assumed by the material struggle for putting across the capitalistic development in a pre-capitalist country. 53

Korsch argued that Marxism was taken up by the progressive intelligentsia in Russia. The theory was interpreted by some theoreticians, like Michaelovski, to suggest that a fully accomplished capitalistic civilization was a necessary historical stage in the process of the realization of a socialist society, when in fact, it was under these conditions that the theory originally arose in Europe. It was then transposed to the Russian situation. Marx and Engels themselves modified their theory in the 1870's and 1880's in order to adapt it to the Russian situation. In the Russian translation of the Communist Manifesto, 1882, the question was put forward; 'can Russia with its primarily peasant population and communal land ownership along with the emerging development of bourgeois property, immediately transform to a higher level

of communism or will it have to go through the same process as the West?' The answer given was that the Russian Revolution could serve as the 'impetus' to world revolution if supplemented by a corresponding revolution in the West. Only with a revolution in Europe could Russia skip a stage and pass from semi-patriarchial and feudal conditions to socialism. Instead the peasant population was wiped out and Marxism was used eventually as a justification by Stalin for 'socialism in one country.' Whereas Marx, Engels and Lenin had changed their theories to serve a future revolutionary movement, Stalin applied the 'ideology' to serve a non-socialist status quo against all revolutionary tendencies.⁵⁴ With the overthrow of the tsar in 1917 debates over the development of capital were brought forward. The Marxist doctrine was fused with the Populist creed to serve capital development and was no longer a theoretical tool of the proletariat. Korsch claimed that it was Lenin, who at the historical turning point of revolutionary development, established the myth of the inherently socialistic nature of the Soviet State. According to Korsch this was the end of the first phase of the history of the Marxist ideology in Russia. He said the developments of Marxism in the East and West were similar. The term he used to describe this process was the 'bourgeois degeneration of Marxism.' He claimed that the theory had never been really adapted to the primitive conditions of Russia, it was a pseudo-marxism. The theory served a purpose opposite to its original

intent.

Just as the "national socialism" of Herr Hitler and the "corporative state" of Mussolini vie with the "Marxism" of Stalin in an attempt to invade, by the use of a pseudo-socialist ideology, the very brains and souls of their workers as well as their physical and social existence, so does the "democratic" regime of a people's front government presided by the "Marxist" Leon Blum or, for that matter, by Mr. Chautemps himself, differ from the present-day Soviet state not in substance, but only by a less efficient exploitation of the Marxist ideology." 55

Korsch later described a 'second wave' of Russian Communist admirers, who did not understand the critique of 1917-27. These admirers had never been involved in the historical struggle. He perceived this in the same way in which Hegel perceived the spirit of the Prussian State, as 'a revolutionary faith in the beyond.' Korsch conceded that the tsar and the old capitalist ruling class had been destroyed not by a progressive proletarian movement but by state capitalism with the development of a class consciousness through 'fascism.' "One cannot protest against a reality simply in the name of an abstract principle."⁵⁶

Korsch summed up Lenin's theory by stating it was intrinsically limited by bourgeois materialism. Korsch stated that Lenin's materialism was never 'historical' and that he differed from the abstract, natural materialists only in degree, not kind. It was not an historical materialism based in class struggle but a continuation of the radical expression of a previous revolutionary movement, a scientifically less developed bourgeois materialist standpoint.⁵⁷ Marx had pointed out in

his thesis on Feuerbach, 1845, "the chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism was that the given world, reality, sensuousness, was conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not subjectively as human sensuous activity" or as "revolutionary practice."⁵⁸

Korsch claimed that Lenin drew more from previous philosophers and bourgeois materialists such as Holbach and Feuerbach than from Marx. Lenin's support or rejection of a theory on the basis of its immediate practical utility was parallel to his belief in a given political form. Korsch also saw this as a remnant of the bourgeois revolution of the past. This was Lenin's belief in political form and his disregard for the social substance.

This is one reason why Korsch saw the necessity of a dialectical theory. He stated that:

There is no need either for the modern bourgeois scientist or for the Marxist to stick to an obsolete (positivistic or materialistic) "philosophy" for the purpose of preserving his full and unbroken "militancy" in the fight against that necessarily in all its forms "idealistic" system of ideas which during the last century under the name of "philosophy" has widely (though not completely) replaced medieval religious faith in the ideology of modern society." - "Marxist Philosophy-as-such." 59

Lenin

Lenin was a member of the intelligensia. His theory was justified on no other basis than what served the political party at any given time. Thus he rejected other tendencies

by claiming they were 'harmful' to the Party. Theory became a subjective, moral, personal stance of the intellectual strata, and it eventually came to serve as a justification of the state. For example, Lenin's friend Maxim Gorki disagreed philosophically with Lenin, but Lenin, "tried again and again to persuade Gorky that 'a member of the party has the duty to oppose a particular theory if he is convinced that it is completely incorrect and harmful; and that the most important thing to do in the case of such an 'absolutely unavoidable struggle' is to ensure that the essential practical work of the party is not impaired."⁶⁰ Therefore countervailing theories were fought as ideologies incorrect from the perspective of party work. This conception of theory is abstract and exists within the realm of the superstructure. It is a conception of theory as a 'truth' containing correct ideas, which are arbitrarily selected by the group or party and not theoretically grounded in social relations. This standpoint made it possible for Lenin to reply to Bogdanov who split from the Bolshevik faction. He did not split from the party, however, because, "the faction is not a party and the party can contain within itself a wide range of shades of opinion of which the most extreme may be absolutely contradictory."⁶¹ Thus the theories of the various members were opinions based not on a concrete-empirical analysis. This is the epitome of a bourgeois political form, existing purely in the realm of consciousness. Lenin defended the philosophical, 'material

truths', against his bourgeois opponents. This demonstrates that Lenin was not primarily concerned with the theoretical problem of whether the materialist philosophy he propounded was true or not. This is further substantiated by his refutation of the transcendentalist theory of the subject/object relation where he deduced the "former molten state of the earth when there could be no subjective 'representations' of it."⁶² This argument had also been used in a different form by his teacher Plekhanov. Lenin's position here is closely related to his political-economic theory of imperialism, which had its roots in the Russian situation.

A result of Lenin's emphasis on materialism rather than on dialectics prevented his materialist philosophy from contributing to the further advancement of the empirical sciences of nature and society. "In the dialectic method, form and content are inseparably linked: ... 'form has no value when it is not the form of its content.'"⁶³ Engels claimed that all individual sciences were independent of philosophy. Philosophy - as such - had been driven from nature and from history into the realm of thought and its laws-formal logic and dialectics. This meant that so-called philosophy was not an individual science above others but an empirical science among others. In other words, there was no necessity for an independent philosophy, because it does not stand outside of history. This was accomplished by using the conscious dialectic of German Idealism within a theoretical

conception of history and nature.⁶⁴ Lenin did the opposite by upholding the materialist position while neglecting the dialectic. Engels adds, "...modern materialism whether applied to nature or history 'is in both cases essentially dialectical and does not in addition need a philosophy which stands above the other branches of knowledge.'"⁶⁵

Korsch concluded that Russian Marxism was more orthodox than the German. The former had been further removed from the underdeveloped conditions of the Russian proletariat than the latter was from the advanced conditions of the German proletariat. "Trotsky's perceptive critical analysis of 1908 showed that this was true of the first phase of its history. The Russian intelligentsia had previously been brought up in the Bakuninist 'spirit of a simple rejection of capitalist culture', and Marxism served as an ideological instrument to reconcile it to the development of capitalism."⁶⁶ Korsch said this analysis was also valid for the second phase which ended with the Revolution of 1905. The Marxists of Russia had claimed to be International Socialists. (At the time that meant orthodox Marxist). In fact Kautsky was in agreement with the Russian Marxists. This orthodoxy existed in the realm of ideology and represented "evanescent historical forms that date from a previous phase of the workers' movement."⁶⁷ Thus Lenin's philosophy existed in the consciousness of the intelligentsia within a party in the superstructure, and it eventually supported the development of the state in the political

sphere.

The Passing of Marxian Orthodoxy

Korsch summed up the 'crisis' of Marxism in his examination of the "Bernstein" debate. He contrasted the Marxist ideology 1900-1932 with the actual proletarian movement and consciousness to show how the relation between Marxist theory and social substance had become disjointed.

The bourgeois press had commended Bernstein's revisionist book. On the other hand, the Social Democrats and trades union sarcastically suggested that Bernstein join with the bourgeoisie, even though the leaders of the Social Democrats actually did in political-economic practice under the banner of a 'Revolutionary Marxist Theory', what Bernstein theorized. The Social Democratic movement, had, in fact developed into a social reform movement from a revolutionary one. Bernstein ended his book with advice to his party, that it, "might venture to appear that it is: a democratically socialist reform party, "he was confidently tapped on the shoulder (in a private letter published later) by that sly old demagog of the party executive committee, Ignaz Auer, with the friendly warning: "My dear Eddy, that is something which one does, but does not say."⁶⁸

Korsch argued that the "anti-capitalist revolutionary class struggle party" of the Social Democrats theory was used to veil the actual character of their policies. These policies

eventually led to the social peace pact of 1914, and to the pact between capital and labor in 1918. Korsch claimed a similar relation existed between the theory and movement of the Communist Party. With the slogan of advancing 'socialism' in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party restricted itself to reforms which "in the final goal" would lead to socialism.

Lenin and Luxemburg who both fought against Bernstein's theory, supported the actual progress of its practical development. They both understood Bernsteinism as a deviation from the "revolutionary" character of Social Democracy. In Bernstein's view the "movement was everything, the final goal nothing," whereas Luxemburg stood by the party because "the final goal of socialism constitutes the only decisive factor distinguishing the Social Democratic movement from bourgeois democracy and from bourgeois radicalism..."⁶⁹ Luxemburg attacked not the practice of the Social Democrats but Bernstein's theory, "which was nothing more than a truthful expression of the actual character of that practice."⁷⁰

In 1930 in honor of Bernstein's eightieth birthday Kautsky embraced Bernstein and declared they had been Siamese twins on party-political matters since 1880. Korsch drew the same correlation between theory and proletarian movement in Russia. It was the 'Bolshevist Social Democrat Lenin' who also struggled against Social Democratic revisionist 'theory' by a "wholly ideological platform, in that he sought the guarantee for the "revolutionary" character of the labor

movement, not in its actual economic and social class content, but expressly, only in the leadership of this struggle by way of the revolutionary PARTY guided by a correct marxist theory."⁷¹

Korsch said the above tendencies could only be understood by their relationship to the proletariat. It was the same kind of relation that the proletarian class bore to the theory and movement of the radical party when the European bourgeois class was still progressive. The once anti-statist ideology of the Social Democrats was transformed into the reformist state capitalism in the World War I period, in the core nations of capital. It was analogous to "the transformation of revolutionary, anti-statist Christianity into the official religion of the Roman state during the Middle Ages."⁷²

In the marginal areas of the capitalist system, where the theory was not developed locally, it was taken up by the repressed classes and expressed in the form of 'communism'. Korsch claimed it was only old Marxism being taken up unsuccessfully because the original theory was based on the, "triumph of capitalism over pre-capitalist socioeconomic formations and the advantageous relationship of this stage of history to the proletarian class struggle; and secondly, old Marxism proceeds from the immediate, positive relationship of the bourgeois to the proletarian revolution."⁷³ The social relationships were different in Russia and Germany and the German form could not be applied uncritically to the Russian content. The reformist nations pursued expansionist and colonialist

policies. In Leninist theory there is an anti-imperialist stance "It could be used as a transitional ideology for their own anti-imperialist class struggle. Such a process would again be analogous to the spread of Christianity among the barbarians outside the territories of the Roman Empire."⁷⁴ "The bird of Minerva begins its flight when the day is gone."

Bernstein

All of the above theories are real, in the sense that they are all forms of consciousness. A false consciousness is still a reality. Korsch was less critical of the revisionist theory of Bernstein, because Bernstein based his analysis on the juridical form of the existing relations of wage-labor and capital, within the static laws of society. Korsch did not claim that his own theory was superior to Bernstein's because it represented the 'true interests of the proletarian class', for it was Bernstein's revisionism which expressed the form of the real movement of this class.

Korsch suggests that Bernstein's revisionism-reformism alone expressed the reality of the working-class movement which was engaged in reformist practice. In Korsch's view, the revolutionary rhetoric of the "orthodox" Marxists was a mere "ideological dissemblance" which had nothing to do with the practice and reality of the working class movement. Moreover, even the "left" Marxists Lenin and Luxemburg failed to penetrate to the core of the problem and focused on Bernstein's theory, whose power to seduce and mislead the workers they saw as the problem. Luxemburg, Korsch suggests, was guilty of an "ideological bedazzlement" on claiming that Bernstein's theory was the first and at the same

time the last attempt to give a theoretical base to opportunism" within a supposedly still revolutionary Social Democratic Movement. As it turns out, she was historically refuted in arguing against Bernstein (who claimed that the movement was everything and the final goal nothing) that the final goal was everything", for it revealed itself in subsequent actual history as in fact that nothing which Bernstein the sober observer of reality, had termed it." Hence Luxemburg failed to see that the problem was not Bernstein's theory, but reformist practice which Bernstein merely-honestly and accurately expressed. 75

Korsch's analysis differed because it was least abstract and it was based on the social process, on the underlying social relations of production which gave rise to the economic and juridical expressions. The base contained the progressive tendency existing within the productive forces and in the dynamic social laws expressed in value. Leninism as a theory was the most abstract or detached from the socialization process. This false consciousness does not imply a conscious deception on the part of the intellectual. Rather it is due to the ambivalent position which can give rise to the belief of being in 'transcendence', which is in actuality a bourgeois form of consciousness.

Bernstein understood socialization as an internal transformation of the content of private property into a relation of public law, within the wage-system. It is this wage-system, Korsch argued which needs to be overthrown. The social relations do not automatically change if property is placed under a different rubric. For Bernstein, "the basic issue of socialization is that we place production, economic

life, under the control of the public weal."⁷⁶ Thus laws and ordinances meant socialism to Bernstein, and he equated social policy with socialization. Korsch claimed that even though Bernstein placed a great deal of emphasis upon social legislation and not socialization; the damaging effects of the capitalist private economy within the existing societal relations were lessened.⁷⁷ But the legal changes did not and could not eliminate the capital/wage-labor relation; because 'legislation' presupposes those relations. A transformation to a directly social labor process would at the same time transform the superstructure, the legal relations and other forms of consciousness. Korsch countered Bernstein's view as follows:

Through the gradual limitations on the privileges (Befugnisse) of private property owners by means of social policy, private property is supposed to be transformed and slowly develops into public property. In reality, however, social policy - which, in its very concept presupposes capitalist private property and wants to merely settle (schlichten) the conflict between the individual rights of the capitalists and the claims of the public by arbitration - can never change into a true socialization without a break and radical change in direction. The important element for true socialization which Bernstein's conception nevertheless contains, apart from his acceptance of capitalist modes of thought, will be discussed in the following sections. In the meantime this point must be emphasized; there can be no socialization of the means of production without either or all at once or gradually eliminating completely the private property owner from the social process of production. ⁷⁸

Korsch agreed with Bernstein that there would not be an inevitable collapse of capitalism. But he did not agree that

the "general business crises after the fashion of earlier ones are now to be regarded as unlikely..."⁷⁹ The crisis is inherent in the system due to the anarchic and fetishistic character of production.

Korsch's Relation to the Frankfurt School

Korsch has often been described as a critical theorist. Korsch was involved with the Institute for Social Research but differed with it on some key points. The debate centered around different interpretations of Marxism; in particular it concerned the dialectical method.⁸⁰ We can trace the origin of this parting of the ways from the statements of the first director, Carl Grünberg, who described Marxism as a self-contained philosophical system. He held to the belief in an "ameliorative evolutionism from less perfect to more perfect."⁸¹

Marxist theory was to be the basis of the Institute which existed from 1923-1950. It was originally set up in order to study and participate in the workers movement. The Institute consisted of European intellectuals, whose members formed part of the 'radicalized intelligensia' in Weimar Germany. Korsch attended the seminar sponsored by Felix Weil in 1922, a year before the Institute opened. In fact Korsch's works, Marxism and Philosophy and the Materialist Conception of History were first published in Grünberg's Archiv.⁸² It has been suggested that Korsch may have been instrumental in the very founding of the Institute. "Felix Weil, who financed

the Institute, met Korsch in 1918 and was strongly influenced by him"...Weil's dissertation on the practical problems of implementing socialism was published in a series of monographs edited by Korsch, who had been one of the first to interest him in Marxism."⁸³ The founding organizational seminar centered around Korsch's unpublished manuscript of Marxism and Philosophy. Korsch gave several lectures and wrote articles for the Institute, mainly in its early period. Grünberg retired in 1929 and Max Horkheimer became director.

The concerns of the Institute changed, particularly with the development of the fascist movement. Emphasis was placed on a developing synthesis of philosophy and the individual sciences in an interdisciplinary atmosphere, devoted to the "mediations" that interconnect consciousness and society. A social psychology was developed by combining the thought of Freud and Marx. This dialectical method was to uncover the links between the individual and society. It was also created in order to help transform society by implementing it. Horkheimer argued that Critical Theory was grounded in Marx's Critique of Political Economy. Kellner notes,

Horkheimer and his associates firmly adhere to the Marxist standpoint that the economy is the crucial determining factor for all social life and individual activity. Moreover, critical theory accepts the Marxist critique of capitalism which sees all social problems as ultimately rooted in the irrationality and contradictions of the capitalist mode of production. "The categories which have arisen under its influence criticize the present. The Marxist categories of class, exploitation, surplus value, profit, impoverishment and collapse are moments of a conceptual

whole whose meaning is to be sought, not in the reproduction of the present society, but in its transformation to a correct society. 84

Korsch would disagree with the above analysis. His position is that the process of production is the base which gives rise to the economic expressions; the contradiction is not between rational and irrational concepts, but is embedded in the social processes which are partially non-social and indirect. The transformation to a directly social labor process is not a "correct" society, but to a wholly social society in form as well as substance. The Critical Theorists fell prey to the errors of Lenin and Luxemburg. They also viewed theory as if it transcended the social processes. This can be seen in their view of the individual and society, as if standing opposed to one another, held together by 'dialectical mediations' instead of through the social division of labor.

In a letter to Paul Mattick, 1938, Korsch clearly outlines his disappointment with the direction of the Institute.⁸⁵ He had visited the Institute in order to publish two articles and to discuss the possibility of writing a book on dialectics with Horkheimer. His two articles, he felt, would lose their real meaning because of the deletions deemed necessary by Horkheimer. After the discussions with Horkheimer Korsch became skeptical of the project. Korsch wrote, "It appears that they want to use me, approximately as they used you recently with your report on economics. They treat me with almost exaggerated respect, but that is only another form,

corresponding to my "high" class position and the respect due to me in virtue of it. When nothing financial results from this, I shall probably in some way break off this partnership that is now viewed very positively from all sides (an anonymous partnership in so far as I am in question, and that suits me fine!)"⁸⁶

The rest of the letter describes the various members of the Institute and their Marxist tendencies. At the time the members were Pollack, Horkheimer, Wissengrund (Adorno), Marcuse, Löwenthal, Neumann, Grossman, Wittfogel.

Korsch described the school as one of "double-book-keeping." "Because they are merely cowardly and egotistical and limited, and not openly counterrevolutionary, that they are in some way revolutionary and ready for struggle (in secret!)."⁸⁷ Korsch suggests that most of the members were anti-Stalinists, yet externally they did not want to come into conflict with them. Korsch described Marcuse as an orthodox Marxist, possibly a Stalinist and "bureaucratically authoritarian in matters of bourgeois philosophy and Marxism (which today has become one and the same)."⁸⁸

Korsch described the members as intelligent and having the potential to produce good work. Yet mostly they held discussions called, "collective" work within a definite hierarchy. The audience was primarily people of the Institute, their wives and a 'few confused students.'

Marxism as Religion

In 1935, Korsch analyzed the New Program of the American Workers Party. Although he agreed with its rejection of the Roosevelt plan and the Communist International as a means for the emancipation of the proletariat, he pointed out that its program did not propose a total break with the capitalist order nor did it come to terms with the concept of the 'planned-economy.'

The central problem with its program rested on its analysis of the key, contradiction of capitalism. The American Workers Program viewed this contradiction as one of 'improper distribution' or 'misdirection' of the use of production. Thus the contradiction was between a productive plant and a system of social relations that prevents the production plant from operating effectively - not for the satisfaction of human wants but for profits. In other words, the productive process was 'capitalistically misused.'

In contrast, Korsch restated that the basic contradiction was between productive forces and production relations, which is an economic, socio-historic contradiction. It is a 'contradiction' involving both a possessing class, who's interest it is to maintain the relations of production, relations of wage-labor and capital to that of the non-possessing class (which is also a productive force), whose interest it is to overthrow these relations. Therefore, it is the whole productive apparatus, including 'real individuals' and

their relations which are to be transformed and not just the productive apparatus. The AWP's analysis of the productive process was faulty, and it lead to further difficulties in drawing up its program.

Korsch charged the program with containing the same errors as the program of european labor parties, which were supposedly revolutionary in theory while reformist in policies. The political program of the AWP stated the 'final goal' was socialism. They advocated the parliamentary path as a temporary step in the transition to achieve state power. Politics was seen as primary, as more important than the economic-social struggle.

Korsch pointed to the parallel development of the AWP to that of the Social Democrats who also had an 'ideology of revolution', but a practice of reformism. In the new situation, the American labor movement was the practical expression of the workers movement, while the AWP had the 'revolutionary theory.' The AWP in a way similar to Lenin proclaimed that, "every class struggle is a political struggle," to the neglect of other spheres of social-life. Korsch understood a 'revolution' to be the overthrow of the relations of the whole productive process, and the liberation of its fetish character. This process could not be achieved by a change in the political order alone or by a 'planned economy', for fascism too claimed to be 'planned.' Instead, the AWP put itself forward as the primary means to

attain socialism. All activities and mass organizations of the proletariat were to be subordinated to it, 'won by the party.' Korsch claimed this was a form of idealism, the demand of winning workers to the merely theoretical inner orientation of the Party. It claimed to possess a superior consciousness to the 'less' developed forms of consciousness apparent in other forms of activities. Its goal was to 'politicize workers and lead them with a revolutionary party and theory.'⁸⁹

Korsch pursued the above themes in his critique of the English Labor Party. He stated that Marxism was used by it as an ideological-vision to make the socialist labor movement more attractive. It was used as a vote-catching device for the Labor Party to persuade the petty bourgeoisie from its fascist tendency. It was not the expression of proletariat class action. The theory did not advocate the overthrow of capitalist relations, but supported moderate social reforms.

Murry, one of the Labor Party's theoreticians, claimed that the socialist movement was represented by a classless political organization, devoted to the Marxist 'vision' or 'faith'. He conceived the main virtue of Marxism to be that the 'true' Marxist by means of Marxism kills off his egotistical "self."⁹⁰ Korsch disagreed and took the stance that only with the development of the self and consciousness of it, can there exist true understanding of one's social existence. Korsch summed up his evaluation of its program by stating it

really 'begged' for state capital, the Planned economy.

Critique of Sociology

Korsch argues there is no link between Marxism and sociology. Korsch states Marx paid little attention to Comte and positivism. Instead, Marx relied primarily on the Classical Bourgeois Economists and the German Idealist Philosophers in formulating his theory. Marx and Engel's concern was with the study of society. Then why was it that, "The science of socialism as formulated by Marx, owed nothing to this "sociology" of the 19th and 20th centuries which originated with Comte and was propagated by Mill and Spencer."⁹¹

Comte had broken from the Utopian Socialist St. Simon to create his own "positivistic" sociology. Since that time, "bourgeois social thought has been a reaction against the theory and thus also against the practice of modern socialism."⁹² Sociology has tried to answer in another way, "the embarrassing questions first raised by the rising proletarian movement."⁹³ Therefore, it is Marxism which is closer to the problems arising from modern historical development. Marxism developed from the social thought of an earlier time when the name 'sociology' was not yet in existence. Society had been discovered and put under scrutiny by Hegel, Smith, Ricardo, etc. Society was "Civil Society." Hegel's system of thought was revised by Marx which then lay bare the foundation of a science of Civil Society, the realm of the social relations which appear as economics. It was Marx who discovered that;

legal relations as well as forms of State cannot be understood out of themselves nor out of the so-called general development of the human mind but, on the contrary, are rooted in the material conditions of life, the aggregate of which Hegel, following the precedent of the English and French of the 18th century, grouped together under the name of "civil society", and that the anatomy of civil society is to be sought in Political Economy. 94

The enquirers into the social nature of man which Marx drew upon, had set up the notion "Civil Society" by expressing the revolutionary epoch of the bourgeoisie. Marx adopted their scientific results which expressed the historical movement of the 18th century, culminating with the industrial revolution in England after the middle of the 18th century and the French Revolution 1789-1815. These results came from Petty and Boisguilleber, Quesney, Smith, Ricardo of the Classical Political Economists and Kant, Fichte, Hegel of the German Idealists.

Korsch points out that Marx criticized the post-classical economists for not advancing beyond Ricardo's achievements, as well as dismissing Comte's theory for the greater achievements of Hegel. It was Marx who developed the Classicists' theories by incorporating into the traditional theory the new developments of society, the emerging proletariat. He exposed the static and dynamic social laws of bourgeois society and its transitory nature. Marx analyzed the whole process of bourgeois society's genesis and further developmental tendencies. Civil Society had been a homogenous whole opposed to Feudalism. Through the course of time there had developed a new class,

a new form of social division. Marxian theory acknowledges these new relations and serves as a guide for practical activity by analyzing the social laws which expose avenues for conscious change. Korsch accuses the sociology which originated with Comte as an "escape from the practical, and therefore also theoretical, tasks of the present historical epoch."⁹⁵ The alternative to sociology is Marx's theory. Korsch states: "Marx's new socialist and proletarian science which, in a changed historical situation, further developed the revolutionary theory of the Classical founders of the doctrine of society, is the genuine social science of our time."⁹⁶

Korsch's Position

A postscript to Mattick contains Korsch's position on Marxist materialism. He criticizes Garrat's Mussolini's Roman Empire. "Garrat understands nothing about class struggle; from the materialist standpoint, it is not a question of what people are thinking in their heads (struggle against religion, etc.), but what they are and do. From Garrat's presentation it follows that the sole counterforce to Franco and Negrin, Mussolini, Hitler, Chamberlain, etc. is the proletariat (that is active in Spain, that is latent internationally; and in Russia ambiguous'.); the church and order in Spain represent a great part of capital (more directly than elsewhere) and thus "struggle against religion, etc." is a more direct struggle against capital and so on. 97

Korsch understood theory and its role to be the expression of the existing class struggle. More specifically, theory is a form of social consciousness which captures the totality of the dynamic and static laws of social existence. Social existence

is understood in terms of relations or processes-socialization. At this time it is social in substance but not in form. Korsch accepts this social process of production as the base. He accepts the reality of the superstructure, but this is rooted in material and social existence. There exists a dialectical relation between subject and object. An individual is an object and also objectifies oneself in the process of labor. The process of labor is social, one produces for the totality. Yet labor is experienced privately and expressed indirectly through the exchange of commodities. The individual is to be understood socially, involved in social relations. The individual possesses a subjective element which is capable of forming a consciousness which develops from social existence. The individual is not a static object but a becoming, although confined within a particular form of production relations. At the same time there exists the potential for a continuing development if the productive forces break through from existing production relations.

Korsch views the historical process as subjective and objective. It is a unity of the process of production and forms of consciousness. His theory is specific, non-dogmatic and applies the materialist conception to Marxism itself, because knowledge is seen on the same plane as other socio-historical forms or consciousness. Therefore Korsch does not merely reject philosophy or religion but sees them related to the totality of historical being and forms of consciousness.

Korsch emphasized the Hegelian side of Marx not by merely turning Hegel on his head, but as a theory which was in direct relation to the bourgeois revolutionary movement.

Korsch criticized Engel's and Lenin's emphasis on the man-nature relation as the primary one. Korsch views this as relegating the relations of social beings to a secondary position. Rather he saw nature, being, consciousness as one social process. "To me it appears that nothing is primary here; that man-nature and man-man are to be coordinated, that both are equiprimedial and fundamental, historically, logically, and practically."⁹⁸ The major interest of Marxist theory is the historical-social process which works upon both nature and 'man.'

Korsch criticized Marx for not carrying his critique of the Classical Political Economists far enough. Korsch says Marx only provided the framework for the development of a social science. ~~that he primarily remained on the same level~~ as the Classical Economists. Now Marx's and Korsch's theory must be further developed into a social science.

Footnotes

1. Karl Korsch, "The Old Hegelian Dialectic and the New Materialistic Science", Council Correspondence, Vol. 3. No. 9 and 10, October 1937; p. 21. (my parentheses)
2. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy (New York: NLB, 1970), pp. 57-8.
3. Karl Korsch, "The Crisis of Marxism", Revolutionary Theory, (1927) p. 172.
4. Ibid., p. 172.
5. Ibid., p. 173.
6. Ibid., p. 173.
7. Ibid., p. 171.
8. Ibid., p. 172.
9. Karl Korsch, Marxism and Philosophy (New York: NLB, 1970), p. 33.
10. Ibid., p. 48.
11. Ibid., p. 60.
12. Ibid., p. 67.
13. Ibid., pp. 71-73.
14. Ibid., p. 82.
15. Ibid., p. 81.
16. Ibid., p. 82.
17. Ibid., p. 83.
18. Ibid., p. 83.
19. Ibid., p. 87.
20. Ibid., p. 88.
21. Ibid., p. 89.
22. Ibid., p. 92.
23. Ibid., p. 95.

24. Ibid., p. 96.
25. Ibid., p. 97.
26. Karl Korsch, Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 16.
27. Karl Korsch, op. cit., pp. 60-61.
28. Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1938) reissued 1963.
29. Karl Korsch, Karl Marx, p. 28.
30. Karl Korsch, "Lenin's Philosophy", Living Marxism, Vol. 4, No. 5 (November 1938) p. 140.
31. Karl Korsch, "The Present State of the Problem of 'Marxism and Philosophy' - An Anti-Critique", (1930), Marxism and Philosophy, p. 114-5, from Kautsky's Neue Zeit xx, 1, p. 68. (New York: NLB, 1970).
32. Ibid., p. 115.
33. Ibid., p. 115.
34. Ibid., p. 118-9.
35. Ibid., p. 119.
36. Ibid., p. 122.
37. Ibid., p. 123, cited from footnote 21.
38. Ibid., p. 125, cited from footnote 22.
39. Ibid., p. 125.
40. Ibid., p. 127.
41. Ibid., p. 128.
42. Ibid., p. 129.
43. Ibid., p. 130.
44. Ibid., p. 131.
45. Ibid., pp. 132-3.
46. Ibid., p. 133.

47. Ibid., p. 133.
48. Ibid., p. 138.
49. Karl Korsch, "The Present State of the Problem of 'Marxism and Philosophy' - An Anti-Critique", (1930), Marxism and Philosophy (New York: New Left Books, 1970), p. 108.
50. Korsch's critique of Kautsky's book is currently being translated by Cyril Levitt.
51. Op. cit., p. 109.
52. Ibid., p. 112.
53. Karl Korsch, "The History of the Marxist Ideology in Russia", Living Marxism, 4 2 (March 1938) and in Revolutionary Theory, (1932), p. 159.
54. Ibid., pp. 160-1.
55. Ibid., p. 164.
56. Ibid., p. 165.
57. Karl Korsch, "Lenin's Philosophy", Living Marxism, Vol. 4, No. 5 (November 1938) p. 141.
58. Ibid., p. 142.
59. Ibid., p. 143. Last statement is mine.
60. Karl Korsch, "The Present State of the Problem of 'Marxism and Philosophy' - An Anti-Critique", (1930) Marxism and Philosophy (New York: New Left Books, 1970), p. 124.
61. Ibid., p. 126 footnote 22.
62. Ibid., p. 128 footnote 26.
63. Ibid., p. 134.
64. Ibid., p. 136.
65. Ibid., p. 136-7.
66. Ibid., p. 140.
67. Ibid., p. 142.
68. Karl Korsch, "The passing of Marxian Orthodoxy-Bernstein-Kautsky-Luxemburg-Lenin", Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory (1932) edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 177.

69. Ibid., p. 179.
70. Ibid., p. 179.
71. Ibid., p. 180.
72. Ibid., p. 175.
73. Ibid., p. 175.
74. Ibid., p. 175.
75. Karl Korsch, "Passing of the Marxian Orthodoxy" in Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 77.
76. Karl Korsch, "What is Socialization" New German Critique, No. 6, (Fall 1975), p. 65.
77. Ibid., p. 74.
78. Ibid., p. 66.
79. Karl Korsch, "Some Fundamental Presuppositions on a Materialist Discussion of Crisis Theory" Revolutionary Theory, edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).
80. It is interesting to note that Kellner points out that Korsch is barely mentioned in Martin Jay's book the Dialectical Imagination which outlines the history of the Institute. This is not surprising.
81. Douglas Kellner, "The Frankfurt School Revisited: A Critique of Martin Jay's Dialectical Imagination", New German Critique 4 Winter 1975, pp. 132-3.
82. Ibid., p. 135.
83. Ibid., p. 135.
84. Ibid., p. 140.
85. Korsch, A letter to Paul Mattick Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) pp. 283-6.
86. Ibid., p. 283.
87. Ibid., p. 284.
88. Ibid., p. 284.

89. Karl Korsch, "On the New Program of the 'American Workers Party'", International Council Correspondence, Vol. 1, No. 4, (January 1935).
90. Karl Korsch, "Marxism as Religion", Living Marxism, Vol. 1, No. 9 (July 1935).
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92. Ibid., p. 18.
93. Ibid., p. 18.
94. Ibid., p. 20.
95. Ibid., p. 23.
96. Ibid., p. 23.
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CHAPTER IV
FORMS OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction:

Socialization

Let the dead bury their dead. The Proletarian Revolution must at last arrive at its own content.

This chapter outlines Korsch's analysis of different social organizations. The first section defines his term 'socialization'. The second section examines the experimental social organizations which attempted to establish socialism. The last section analyzes the failure of socialism by looking for the forces which brought about fascism in its stead. It may be easier and more pleasant to forget the atrocities of fascism and attribute it all to an 'insane' Hitler, but history is not made by one man alone. The sources of our historical past must be discovered in the underlying economic-social movement of the time. This encompasses various classes and the forms of struggle manifested. To turn our back on a history made only forty years ago is to ignore what 'man' created and continues to create albeit under different guises.

Korsch says socialism is achieved through a process of socialization, and defines socialization as the active, conscious activity of constructing a socialist society.¹ Socialization is concerned primarily with production and is the establishment of a "new regulation of production with the goal of replacing the private capitalist economy by a

socialist communal economy."² This involves both the socialization of the means of production and labor. Thus socialization is not primarily concerned with the technical process of production but with the social relations and their metamorphosis. In the process of production human beings work upon nature and each other in a social division of labor by creating objects which satisfy wants. In capitalist society, 'social processes of production are essentially viewed as the private affair of individual persons.'³ The process of socialization would establish an economic order in which the social process of production is considered a communal affair of the producing and consuming whole, where production would be equal to the sum total of social relations. The socialization process would involve the conscious control of the creation of value, the socially necessary labor time for the production of goods by the immediate producers. This would eliminate the fetishistic character and non-social element of these current relations. The totality of producers and consumers would constitute society. The producers, instead of experiencing their labor privately, would understand that their production is but a part of the total social labour. This would necessarily lead to the elimination of the wage system in which the laborer is formally free, but in social substance is bound. The Paris Commune and Spanish Collectives will be considered in this light. They tried to break out of the capital/wage labor relations. The next section considers the counterrevolution which re-

established the production relations of wage-labor and capital, although under different political forms. A new stage of development in capitalist society, the end of the free market and the beginning of monopoly on an ever widening scale had begun. In contrast to the above socialization process, the counterrevolutionary process involved the continuation of the indirectly social labor process which includes the non-conscious control of production, its fetishistic nature and the production of a non-social surplus. Thus it is argued that the labor process during this time was confined to the production relations of substantively unfree wage labor, with the means of production in the hands of the class of non-producers. Groups in control attempted to change the distribution process and political forms while the social substance, the productive base remained the same.

Korsch argued that socialism replaces capitalist ~~private property with social property.~~ In other words, the means of production are at the disposal of the society as a whole. The means of production are physical objects used for productive achievements. Objects are not a means of production in and of themselves, but only through the process of social labor with the creation of goods for consumption. This labor process is no longer carried out by individual persons or self sufficient units for the satisfaction of private wants. There will be a social division of labor in which goods in common will be produced. Capital has often been seen as the

means of production in its corporeality. In fact, capital is a specific historically determinate relation of production in the form of a thing or things. The wage-laborer sells his labor power to the capitalist who controls the social process and acquires the social surplus, the surplus less the amount which buys the labor power necessary for production. The replacement of private property in the means of production with social property is the liberation of labor from alien capital domination and exploitation. The class struggle arises between this opposition of the relations of capital and wage-labor. With the elimination of this relation, class division and domination is eliminated. The power of the capitalist private property owner who controls social production appears as economic power. Both the economic and political forms of power are social relationships between persons which are obscured by public and private law.⁴ "There can be no socialization of the means of production without either all at once or gradually eliminating completely the private property owner from the social process of production."⁵ Socialization involves more than the mere change of owners. Socialization can not alter the fact that, "even after the complete elimination of the capitalist private property owner, the same means of production can only be used for production at a given time by a determinate number of producing workers - as every means of consumption can, in the same way, be consumed or used only by a determinate number of people at the moment when it

fulfills its purpose. In a socialist communal economy one must also decide which people may and should use the existing means of production under what working conditions production should proceed, and in which way the products of production should be distributed among the totality of the producers and consumers. In the socialist communal-economy there also is a regulation of the social relations of production, an order of property. The establishment of this order is the task of socialization."⁶

The surplus which under existing relations accrues to non-producers would be distributed to the totality of consumers and producers. The control of the productive process would also be organized through organs representing the totality. Socialization is not synonymous with nationalization where capital is represented by functionaries of the state leaving the relation of unfree labor in tact. Instead of private owners or managers, representatives of the producers would control this process. Production would be purely for social demand rather than for the market in an exchange economy. Self-interest would serve as an impetus for this socialization since it (self interest), would now correspond to the interest of the social whole. Labor power would become communal property, "whereby every individual contributes to social production according to his ability and in turn participates in the profits of communal production according to his need."⁷ In place of private individual egoism a 'socialized' group egoism appears. (social consciousness)

Although Korsch outlines the above important concepts of socialization he does not incorporate them into his later analysis to any great extent. The importance of examining the past attempts at new forms of social organization is to discover why they failed. Korsch's analysis is a limited one due to his reliance on 'class content' as a primary factor in the establishment of socialism. This is important but socialization is more than the transition of power from one class to another. The significance of the past attempts lies with the social substance. This stands opposed to theories which propose a political form as a primary factor in establishing socialism.

The Paris Commune

Korsch was correct in his opposition to those who asserted that the failure of the Russian Revolution rested with the leaders who betrayed the council concept, a concept which represented an earlier struggle of the Paris Communardes. The council system had been upheld as the essential political form of proletarian government. Korsch argued that the commune represented a still older, bourgeois form of government.

The commune forms from the beginnings in the eleventh century up to the highest culmination which the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie found in the French Revolution of 1789/93 the almost pure class-oriented manifestation of that struggle which in this whole historical epoch the then revolutionary bourgeois class has waged in various forms for the revolutionary change of the whole hitherto existing feudal order of society and the founding of the new bourgeois social order. 8

To argue that the Russians did not implement the right concept is synonymous to positing an abstract principle to which history did not correspond. Korsch posed the question, "What is - after this total historical experience - the real historical and class-oriented significance of this new political form of government, which brought about in the first place the revolutionary Commune of 1871, although its development was forcefully interrupted after 72 days duration and then the Russian Revolution of 1917 in concrete, more final shape?"⁹

Korsch suggests that when Marx claimed that the Revolutionary Commune of the Paris workers was the "finally discovered political form" it was for its class content. Yet, this transition did not last and Korsch does not provide any further analysis as to the reasons why. Korsch claims an important element of this form was that, "...the revolutionary communal constitution thus becomes under certain historical conditions the political form of a process of development, or to put it more clearly, of a revolutionary action where the basic essential goal is no longer to preserve any one form of state rule, or even to create a newer "higher state-type", but rather to create at last the material conditions for the "withering away of every state altogether."¹⁰

The question is then posed as to whether an intermediate political form of any kind is necessary, or perhaps even impedes the development of socialism. Socialism would need an administrative organ to coordinate production, but a state, as is known today, is part of the

superstructure and would disappear with new production relations. New relations would make it obsolete. The ambivalent 'withering away of the state' created a two-stage theory of the transition, thus suspending the actual socialization in an indefinite future.

Korsch states that by examining the political program of Marx and Engels before and after the Paris Commune of 1871, the concept did not correspond to their theories. Korsch does not continue by explaining this difference in terms of the analysis of the social substance. Rather he turns to the political form and suggests that Marx and Engels were admirers of the centralized system of the revolutionary bourgeois dictatorship realized by the French Revolution. This may well be true, but the contrast in theories lies with the importance of the process of production more than the political form. It was Michael Bakunin, Marx's rival who had history on his side concerning the Paris Commune. He suggested that Marx had added the Paris Commune to his theory, due to the revolutionary fervor of the times. "The impact of the Communist insurrection was so powerful that even the Marxists, who had all their ideas thrown to the wind by it, were forced to doff their hats to it. They did more than that; in contradiction to all logic and their innermost feelings, they adopted the program of the Commune and its aim as their own."¹¹

The Commune was composed of elements taken from the federalist program of Bakunin Proudhon, revolutionary Jacobins

and from some Marxists. During the Inaugural Address of the First Internationale, when Marx made the statement, "It is therefore the great task of the working class now to seize political power",¹² instead of eliminate it, he emphasized the political sphere to the neglect of the social substance. The Communist Manifesto was written in 1847-8 and Capital in 1865-7. This emphasis on political form led Lenin to do the same. He made an historical error in State and Revolution, 1917, in his version of the Communist Manifesto. It contained the statement from Marx of the necessity of abolishing the state. Korsch claimed this was not verified by Marx until the experience of the Paris Commune of 1871. Lenin skipped twenty years in his reproduction and incorporated his own interpretation. He started with the 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1852 and moved to the Civil War in France, 1871. Lenin carried forth Marx's analysis suggested that the Commune was central-
~~ist and applied it to the Russian situation, when in fact the~~
 Paris Commune was federative and anti-centralist. In any case they were both concerned with political form and neglected social production. Yet Marx, Engels and Lenin all proclaimed the future necessity of the elimination of the state. In the meantime there developed a two-stage political theory, instead of an analysis of social process of production.

The Spanish Collectives

The Spanish revolution provided another source for

examining new forms of socialization. Korsch outlines the different phases of the Spanish Revolution, beginning with the fall of the Monarchy, 1931, followed by the workers uprising of 1936 and finally the defeat by Franco coinciding with the world wide counterrevolution.

The Monarchy was replaced in 1931 by the bourgeois republic of Cortes. The importance of socialization as a change in the relation of the production process can be shown through the limitations of trying to institute change through the political sphere. There was both a Social Democratic and Syndicalist movement in Spain. The Social Democrats did not make any radical demands on the new bourgeois government. In fact, in the preceding period they had supported the joint committees of the dictator, while even the 'right' parties had opposed them.

The importance of the process of production as the foundation of society is shown by the example of Catalonia. It was the most highly socially developed area with the strongest syndicalist organization. The organization existed even though it was prohibited by law in Madrid and it was not involved with politics. At this time the organization did not wage open warfare, but it would come to serve as the impetus for revolutionary action in 1936.

The Spanish workers in 1936 did seize control of the production process for a time before the encroaching counter-revolution.¹³ Korsch drew upon a book by the Spanish workers

themselves¹⁴ in order to show the real historical developments in Spain at the time. This book demonstrates another attempt at the transition to a new form of social organization, but does not offer details. The book which the leading labor organizations, the syndicates, CNT, and the anarchists, FAI, of Catalonia had authorized contains the methods and results of collectivization in the industrially advanced provinces of Spain. The editors allowed "the Spanish revolutionists speak for themselves."¹⁵

Korsch compares this decree of the Catalonia Economic Council of October 10, 1936 to the socialization decrees in European history in order to show the importance of their class content. He states in contrast to an "arbitrarily selected body of learned experts, lacking all real authority such as the notorious "Permanent Special Commission" of the French February revolution of 1848 or its faithful copy, the German "Socialization Commission" of 1918-9" that the Spanish decree "contained no special directions that transcend the limits already set by the spontaneous movement of the workers."¹⁶

Yet, eventually the Spanish collectives failed too. The question must be posed, is it then just a matter of the right class content? The case of the failure of socialism in Germany may have been due to the lack of class consciousness, whereas the Spanish workers possessed it. The spontaneity and lack of analysis of the tasks of collectivization may have been a contributing factor to their failure. The conscious

control of the process of production necessitates much detailed planning.

Korsch continued by explaining that there was in Catalonia no executive authority or parliament, except for the "Committees of Anti-Fascists Militias" formed by representatives of the libertarian labor movement. The large capitalists had left when the Franco rebellion in Barcelona failed, making it unnecessary to expropriate them. The Catalonia proletariat established itself at will in the capitalist plants and offices that had been deserted. After the industries were seized and controlled by the workers they were operated in the same manner as "the stock companies of capitalist economy."¹⁷ The workers elected councils in which all activities of the plants were represented; production, administration, technical service, etc. The business management was left to a director chosen by the workers of each shop who may have been the former owner or manager under new social conditions. Korsch stresses that these external similarities did not mean that under collectivization the system of production did not change. Rather he argued that, "it merely demonstrates the relative ease with which under the equally fortunate circumstances as had offered themselves here - deep and far reaching changes in productive management and wage-payment can be accomplished without great formal and organizational transformations."¹⁸

Perhaps the eventual failure of the collectives can

be sought in the fact that the workers did operate the companies in the same manner, a different class within the same relations does not automatically create a new form of social labour, Korsch does not provide enough information as to the exact nature of the new social conditions. Instead of discussing the productive process he suggested there was a conscious appropriation of management and wage payment. He does not explain why the 'far reaching changes' failed. Socialization is more than new management in the same relations, which includes the elimination of wage labor.

The Syndicalist formation was anti-party, anti-centralist and based on the free action of the working masses. They were criticized for being utopian by the successful trades union of England and the powerful Marxist organizations of middle and eastern Europe. Yet even though the Spanish Collectives were not managed by professional officialdom they also failed. At the time Korsch saw their successes rooted in their anti-state attitude and the class content of their movement claiming they had been "unhampered by self-created organizational and ideological obstacles."¹⁹ In any case, the Collectivization was not a nationalization or state capitalism. After two years it was abandoned to fight fascism.

The above exposition brings up the question of how appropriate was Marx's theory for predominately non-industrialized countries like Russia and Spain? The failures of these attempts demonstrate that socialization consists of more than

the substitution of one form of class domination for another. The transformation is primarily one of the social relations of the process of production and cannot be implemented through the superstructure, through politics. All these attempts were isolated, which points to the necessity for class consciousness and of the international character of socialization.

The Counterrevolution

An Historical Account of the Fascist Movement

The era of fascism has often been understood in history as a battle between the abstract principles of fascism and democracy, or the forces of good and evil. Another way of presenting this historical period has been explaining it away due to Hitler's frame of mind, his political and ideological complexities; this is a form of psychologism.²⁰ History consists not only of 'great men' and 'great events.' History is the movement of all classes. In order to understand the past, an analysis of the underlying economic-social conditions must be brought forth. This era can be contrasted with the previous attempts at socialization, as a battle relegated within the political sphere and amongst the ruling classes. With the rise of fascism the preceding revolutionary class struggle waged against the whole productive process and therefore necessarily also against the superstructure was substituted for an anti-fascist coalition.²¹ A revolution is synonymous with socialization. It involves a fundamental transformation

of the productive process which frees a hitherto oppressed class, the immediate producers who sell their labor power. A counterrevolution is a process which hinders that development by continuing within the same production relations. There were struggles amongst the ruling classes for the control of the means of production which resulted in changes of the political form and control of the surplus which created monopoly; yet the social substance remained the same.

For an understanding of the development of Nazism in Germany and what Korsch describes as the worldwide counter-revolution, he examines the period preceding it. He focuses primarily on the political form, the Weimar Republic, instead of examining more closely the battle over the process of production. The Weimar Republic began and ended with war (1918-1933). Korsch poses the question of whether the Weimar Republic as commonly understood, in fact actually existed as a real political force. Formally the Weimar Republic began August 1919, after the abdication of the Kaiser. A new republican constitution was instituted and it remained valid until the Nazis seized political power. Hitler was named chancellor of the German Republic January 30, 1932, by the president Hindenburg. After Hindenburg's death in 1934, the office was abolished by Hitler; thus he became both leader and chancellor, legally, on the formal record.

The interlude between the two wars was characterized by the struggle over socialization.

First there was the struggle for the Workers Councils. The Council of the People's Commission represented by the Social Democrats was replaced by a coalition in February 1919. The coalition consisted of three parties; the moderate social democrats, Catholic Church and a newly formed democratic state party which accepted the parliamentary republic of the Weimar. The revolutionary Spartakusbund emerged out of the formerly united Social Democrats. Korsch saw this period as one of turmoil, ruled neither by the working class nor parliament. In fact, the state in November 1918, was in a temporary eclipse, with the struggle over the councils. The internal disunity of the political sphere was indicative of the fluctuations in the social substance.

The reactionary assault of August 11, 1919 was described by Korsch as the 'future kernel' of the military organization of the Nazis. The first reactionary onslaught of the putsch of Kapp failed since it had relied solely on a military organization with no political or ideological stance. More importantly, the reason for its failure was the mass of workers who defended the republic with a general strike,

The political regime became solely a rule by the president, who had free reign on emergency measures and martial law through the use of Article 48. The interlude between the old imperialistic Germany and the new Nazi Germany was a time of struggle and experimentation with socialization. In essence

it was a 'Republic without a Republic.'

The counterrevolution acted as a deterrent to the socialization process and enveloped it. Korsch defined the counterrevolution as a "counter action of the united capitalist class against all that remains today of the results of the first great insurrection of proletarian forces in war torn Europe; which culminated in the Russian Revolution of October 1917."²² It also meant the passive acceptance of the objective economic development on the part of the masses and Marxist groups. This was in part due to their understanding of revolution. It was the traditional view of Marx which carried the birthmarks of the Jacobinic bourgeois revolution. The genesis of counterrevolutionary movements were seen by Korsch in the failure of the French Revolution of 1848, particularly with the coup of Louis Napoleon in 1851. Marx and Proudhon were both deceived by this and saw within this a 'creation of an opponent; analogous to the ultimate coming of Christ preceded by the anti-Christ.'²³ This same analysis of the counterrevolution was offered by some of the communists. They welcomed the victory of fascism as a prelude to communism. The communists predicted the collapse of the new counterrevolutionary government which would then be superceded by a proletarian revolution. Thus they hailed their own defeat as a victory through a blind faith in an essentially progressive development of the objective societal forces. Instead of understanding the proletarian revolution as a process

of socialiation, it was conceived as produced by the willed action of isolated groups, parties and classes. The transformation of a revolutionary workers movement into a counter-revolutionary movement must be sought in this process of socialization, which the political sphere reflects. The control of the political sphere by the Nazis demonstrated the return to the previous production relations. A state exists because of these relations. The counterrevolution was a new phase of societal development within the relations of capital and wage labor. It cannot be explained away as an abnormal temporary disturbance of a normally progressive development. The traditional Marxist view of revolution saw revolution-socialization as a normal process, hence it did not anticipate a 'counterrevolution'. The counterrevoltuion can be understood as an 'evolutionary' change because it did not alter the productive process. Rather it replaced the reformist parties and tried to fulfill their failed tasks within the superstructure of the political realm. The following statement by Marx seemed to possess a belief in a linear progressive development.

...a revolution does not occur at some arbitrary point of social development but only at a definite stage. At a certain stage of their development the material productive forces of society come into contradiction with the existing production relations (or property relations) within which they hitherto moved. From being forms of development those relations turn into fetters upon the forces of production. Then a period of social revolution sets in. And again Marx emphasized, and even to a certain extent exaggerated, the objectivistic principle of his materialist theory

of revolution according to which "a formation of society never perishes until all the forces of production for which it is wide enough have been developed." All this is true enough as far as it goes. We have all seen how evolutionary socialism reached the end of its rope. We have seen how the old capitalistic system based in free competition and the whole of its vast political and ideological superstructure was faced by chronic depression and decay. There seemed no way open except a wholesale transition to another, more highly developed form of society to be effected by the social revolution of the proletarian class. 24

However Korsch argues that a different historical development took place. This was the transition back to and stabilizing of the production relations of wage-labor and capital, not orchestrated by the previously democratic means of a bygone era but with the creation of a totalitarian state developed along with monopoly capital on a broader historical scale. The failure of the socialization process after World War I led to the development of counterrevolution. There no longer existed any countervailing force, no class consciousness. Thus the counterrevolution was not a new form of socialization but a transformation of private, competitive capital into an organized state capital with the indirectly social labor process. The workers did not fight their own battle against these relations but aligned themselves with one of the other groups either fighting for or against fascism. There developed a new corporate community of interlocking directorates. Prices were established by administrative decision rather than in the free market, while production carried on.

The different political forms were communism, fascism,

nazism and democracy. They had significant differences but the same social substance. Korsch argues that the verbal battles between totalitarian and anti-totalitarian regimes clouded the real issue. He did not see the real enemy solely as Herr Hitler with his inferiority complex but as democracy itself. He does not say that it was because the material/social process under democracy was the same process under the different regimes. Capital relations had reached an impasse. The counterrevolution represented a fight amongst various capital strata.

The workers were told to align themselves with the progressive bourgeoisie against the common enemy of fascism. Korsch took the stance that,

The workers cannot participate in "democracy's fight against fascism" for the simple reason that there is no such fight. To fight against fascism means for the workers in the hitherto democratic countries to fight first of all against the democratic branch of fascism within their own countries. To begin their own fight against the new and more oppressive form of capitalism that is concealed in the various forms of psuedo-socialism offered to them today, they have first to free themselves from the idea that it might still be possible for present-day capitalism to "turn the clock back" and to return to traditional pre-fascist capitalism. They must learn to fight fascism on its own ground which, as we have said before, is entirely different from the popular, but in fact self-destructive advice that the anti-fascists should learn to fight fascism by adopting fascist methods. 25

Although the democracies were not outright totalitarian in the political superstructure the production relations were the same. In any case they were a species of the corporate state.

Essentially what was occurring was the worldwide expansion of commodity production, as Marx said, "transforming the whole world into one gigantic market for capitalist production."²⁶ The production of capital was thwarted nationally by its international tendency.

"Marx and Engels were scientists not prophets,"²⁷ they analyzed the commodity production of their time and provided a scheme of the developmental tendencies of the social laws. These laws could not be destroyed by a change in distribution or exchange. Even though the fascists claimed to have destroyed all economic laws, they had just reacted differently to the need of distributing the social labor.

Korsch described this as a time when "less than ever do people understand their own activities and happenings in their world."²⁸ It seemed as though Hilferding's thesis of all control in one hand was true. Yet, the social law (value) which regulates the capitalist market and guides all individual activity continued. For Marx, value in labor terms meant, "the haphazard and continually fluctuating relations of exchange between the various products of labor, the labor time socially necessary for their production forcibly asserts itself as a regulating natural law just as the law of gravity does when the house collapses over our heads."²⁹ This is a historical fact, not an economic necessity. Value relations appear as 'economic laws' because capitalists pursue their own ends and labor is experienced privately in the process of

production. Modern society developed from another form of class society. The social labor process was further developed but it was not able to coordinate all its parts so that all of society participated in the progress of increasing productivity. Society is regulated by the defeats and successes in this social war. It is caused by the relations of capital and wage-labor, the social labor producing the surplus, only receiving part; the rest consists in the non-social surplus. This appears as economic activity. The economic laws conceal the relations between individuals in the process of production and in other spheres of social life. They appear as a necessity to the capitalist. They believe that only by developing these laws will society improve, when in fact these laws conceal the exploitation of the immediate producers.

This is the reason why it made no sense to distinguish between the fascist regime and the democracies.

To call one economic system capitalistic, another socialistic, and the third nothing for lack of terms does not solve any questions. Instead of arguing about names, one should describe in concrete terms the actual relations between men and men in the productive process, and their position in relation to the extra-economic sources of power. When one does that, all discernable differences become quite unimportant. In all essentials these systems are alike. In each a separate group controls the rest of society. 30

Production For War and Peace

The previous distinctions between production during war and peace ceased to exist in this new phase. Production

was solely for profit. Progress had once been achieved through war. The relation between war and production was implicit in the development of bourgeois society from the 15th and 16th centuries. Korsch argued war should not be viewed 'aesthetically' but empirically, socially, economically, politically-historically. In other words, the historical function of war must be found.

The phases of the historical development of war and revolution from 1789-1941 should not need a detailed explanation. It is of course a great shock for those naive democrats of Europe and the U.S. who until recently had quite honestly believed in the opposite claims of the Nazi propaganda to be reminded of the historical fact that modern "total war" is by no means one of the devilish inventions of the Nazi revolution but is really in all its aspects, including its very language, the genuine product of democracy itself and more particularly the fruit of the American War of Independence and of the French Revolution. 31

The first total war, putting all of a country's resources into the service or production of war began August 23, 1793 by the fourteen citizen armies at the darkest hour of the new French Republic. It began as a revolutionary defense of an oppressed class. This revolutionary function was lost when the production for war became an intricate part of the whole process of production. Bourgeois society was not entering a new stage of ascendancy. Modern warfare was the outcome of a particular phase of the French Revolution. The outside aggressors enforced the authoritarian and violent measures of the dictatorship of the Jacobinic party. The second phase brought

with it the further developed anti-democratic Prussian state. The developments then foreshadowed the counterrevolution, "New forms of material production appear earlier in the forms of warfare than in peace-time production." Thus the present totalitarian war anticipates those new economic forms which will be achieved at a later date through the complete transition of all capitalistic countries to a planned rather than to a competitive and private mode of capitalistic production."³² ...the creation of the War Economy.

The production for war is not understood. If it was it would be eliminated.

If we did know we would no longer live under the conditions of a society based on capitalist competition or even a society based on those imperfect and fragmentary forms of planning that are compatible with the maintenance of private property and wage labor. A full knowledge and an ensuing conscious control of the war by the people themselves presupposes that society of freely associated producers which will result from a genuine social revolution. Under such conditions there would no longer be any need for war. 33

World History

It is time to acknowledge that world history is in the making. As historians we must transcend the "pre-Copernican view which regards its own restricted sphere as the center if not the whole extent of the "world" which has prevailed the writings of both liberals and socialists for the last 200 years."³⁴

Marx conceived history as a progressive development of humanity in terms that "all (written) history is the

found its ultimate expression in Spengler's pan-historicism. The approach a researcher uses reveals his/her position in the economic-social struggles of the time. "We can no longer be fooled by the flippant contention of an ultra-modern writer that the historian "should leave out as much as possible" or by the more intelligent pronouncement that it is more important for the historian to forget than to remember. We know that more than a century ago Hegel said that "thought is after all the most trenchant epitomist."³⁷ Whether or not a bias is consciously acknowledged or not, if 'science' claims to be 'objective', theory does not stand outside of history. In essence, the approach used as 'historical analysis' reflects the 'spirit' of the times within which it was written.

For us it depends entirely on the given conditions of a definite period whether "history" is treated as a providential history of Creation or as a profane history of Civilization, and in the latter case, whether its subject matter is supposed to be Civilization (in the singular and with a capital C) or a number of coordinated civilizations; whether it is regarded statically as a recurrence of essentially the same processes or dynamically as a "development", and whether the development in question is conceived as an external movement of visible and tangible objects in space and time or as a so-called "internal" development in time; whether it is considered to move upward or downward or on the same level, in a straight line or in spirals or cycles; whether it proceeds from the simple to the complex or vice versa, and whether it is regarded as a harmonious cooperation of individuals and groups or as a struggle of every man against every man, of nations, races, or classes. 38

The unity of theory and socialization will be accomplished when the science of history becomes relativized further so that

each specific form of history is part of a given structure of society and changes its form and content along with the transformations that take place on the economic, political and other spheres. "And just as we can imagine a future society in which not only the theory of the state, but even the state itself will have dropped out of existence without having been replaced by another state, we can imagine a time when there will be no history."³⁹ The result of this would mean a new application of theoretical knowledge with the historical studies. If theory presents the social facts based on their particular 'time conditioned' aspects there will be no need for an independent science (or philosophy) per se. It will become superfluous just as a comprehensive science of "nature" per se became superfluous when the physical sciences became more closely related to their practical application in technology. "Theoretical history will ultimately be fused with its practical application to the concrete tasks to be solved by associated individuals within a given form of society."⁴⁰

Footnotes

1. Karl Korsch, "What is Socialization?" New German Critique, No. 6 (Fall 1975) p. 60.
2. Karl Korsch, "Fundamentals of Socialization", Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, edited by Douglas Kellner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), p. 260.
3. Op. cit., p. 61.
4. Ibid., p. 65.
5. Ibid., p. 66.
6. Ibid., p. 67.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Karl Korsch, "Revolutionary Commune" Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory, edited by Douglas Kellner (first article published 1929, second article 1931)(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977) p. 203.
9. Ibid., p. 202.
10. Ibid., p. 206.
11. Ibid., p. 207. cf. Brupbacher: Marx and Bakunin 114-115.
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13. Karl Korsch, "Collectivization in Spain", Living Marxism, Vol. 6, (April 1939), p. 179.
14. F.N. Collectivization. Recueil de documents. Editions C.N.T. F.A.I., 1937, 244 pages.
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16. Ibid., p. 179.
17. Ibid., p. 180.
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20. Karl Korsch, "Review of Ignacio Silone's School for Dictatory, Living Marxism, Vol. 6 (April 1939).

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27. Karl Korsch, "The Fight for Britain, the Fight for Democracy and the War Aims of the Working Class", Living Marxism, Vol. 5 no. 4 (Spring 1941), p. 10.
28. Ibid., p. 14.
29. Ibid., p. 15.
30. Ibid., p. 19.
31. Karl Korsch, "War and Revolution" Living Marxism Vol. VI No. 1, 1941, Fall, page 6.
32. Ibid., p. 11.
33. Ibid., p. 7.
34. Karl Korsch, "The World Historians" Partisan Review Vol. 9, No. 5, (Sept/Oct. 1942) p. 367.
35. Ibid., p. 358.
36. Ibid., p. 369.
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CONCLUSION

What is a science of society? Korsch provided us with insights for developing a social theory of modern society, founded on the work of Marx, but only on condition that this work is subject to criticism. Marx's original theory was dependent on the economic and political underdevelopment of Germany and Europe, where it gained political importance. The theory was bound by its adherence to the political form of the Jacobinic bourgeois revolution. Marxist theory has primarily been used for political vilification in the 20th century instead of serving as the expression of the movement of the proletariat or the socialization of labor. Marx's original theory is an historical product, and thus it no longer pertains, as a whole, to the new historical situation. Marx's contribution was his critique of political economy which centered around the analysis of value. Value was shown to be a social relation arising between individuals in the process of production but mediated through things. The social processes and relations that Marx began to analyze were taken up by Korsch who provided us with a new definition of revolution as 'socialization'. His analysis of socialization was based on the understanding that the process of production is the base or foundation of society. Although the superstructure is a reality, base and superstructure together form the

historical movement. Korsch reaffirmed the principle set forth by Marx of historical specificity, whereby categories of analysis are not eternal but pertain to a specific epoch. Theory is the expression of the historical movement itself, so by definition theory can not be in advance of history.

Korsch's theory can best be described as 'Living Marxism' because of his use of Hegel's dialectic. It enabled him to penetrate through the plethora of theoretical trends and movements of his time and provide us with the essential principles for a Marxist social science. He emphasized the dialectical relation of subject and object. If this relation is arbitrarily separated then the comprehension of theory as the expression of the proletarian movement is lost.

Besides his early analysis on socialization the major part of Korsch's work is a critique of other theories. In his last analysis on forms of social organization he emphasized political form and neglected the analysis of the social process of production. The historical movement of his time was the world wide expansion of social labor within the relations of capital and wage labor. His analysis of the counterrevolution can be understood in this light. It was the movement of the proletariat on a world wide scale or the development of the same social substance throughout. Yet it manifested a variety of political forms. The social relations and processes should be the foundation upon which a social theory is built. It is necessary to update Marx's and Korsch's work in order to show

the developmental tendencies contained in modern society. The problems of modern society may be understood theoretically but can only be solved practically and socially by the immediate producers who are bound in substance by the relations of capital and wage labor. They produce all value yet only a part of it is returned to them. The rest accrues to a class of non-producers, thus making surplus-value an anti-social relation.

My thesis has been the first attempt at analyzing the English works of Karl Korsch. He did the forbidden; he analyzed Marxist theory itself and discovered it had become an ideology. I chose his work for the topic of my thesis in order to begin learning about Marxism. I was not satisfied with a number of theoretical trends which could not grasp the historical movement. Korsch's dialectical approach provided a method capable of comprehending a complex world.

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