

JOHN McMURTRY

# Structure of Marx's World-View



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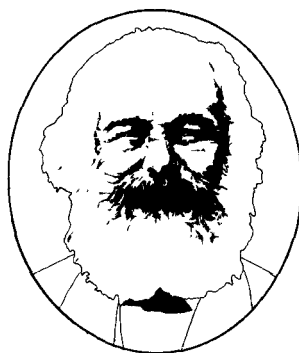
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*“Mankind sets itself only such problems as it can solve.”*  
*-Karl Marx*



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## Key to Abbreviations

In each case, the first and last pages of the primary text (including author prefaces) are added in brackets to help the reader locate quotations in other editions. A star (★) indicates that the translator and/or editor is not given.

- CI*      *Capital* (Volume I), Karl Marx. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, ed. Frederick Engels. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1965 (7-774).
- CII*      *Capital* (Volume II), Karl Marx. Trans. I. Lasker, ed. Frederick Engels. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967 (25-527).
- CIII*      *Capital* (Volume III), Karl Marx. Ed. Frederick Engels. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1954 (23-910).★
- CM*      *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Trans. and ed. Frederick Engels and Samuel Moore. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1969 (11-91).
- CPÈ*      *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx. Trans. S. Ryazanskaya, ed. Maurice Dobb. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1970 (18-227).
- CW*      *The Civil War in France*, Karl Marx. Ed. Frederick Engels. Martin Lawrence Ltd., London, 1933 (21-66).★
- EPM*      *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Karl Marx. Trans. and ed. Martin Milligan. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961 (20-171).
- G*      *Karl Marx/Grundrisse*. Trans. and ed. Martin Nicolaus. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973 (82-893).
- GID*      *The German Ideology*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Trans. and ed. S. Ryazanskaya. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964 (21-596).
- GP*      *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Karl Marx. Ed. Frederick Engels. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966 (10-30).★
- 18thB*      *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1967 (10-30).★

- KMC* *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*. Ed. Shlomo Avineri. Doubleday, New York, 1969 (47-473).
- OB* *On Britain*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Lawrence and Wishart Ltd. London, 1962 (1-584).\*
- PofP* *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Karl Marx. Ed. Frederick Engels. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1966 (25-152).\*
- Pre-C* *Karl Marx/Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. Trans. Jack Cohen, ed. E. J. Hobsbawm. Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1964 (67-148).
- R* *The Revolutions of 1848*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Ed. David Fernbach. Random House, New York, 1974 (62-267).
- RZ* *Articles from the Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Trans. S. Ryazanskaya, ed. B. Isaacs. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964 (21-596).
- SC* *Selected Correspondence*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1953 (25-571).\*
- S-V I* *Theories of Surplus-Value* (Part I), Karl Marx. Trans. Emile Burns, ed. S. Ryazanskaya. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1954 (40-400).
- S-V II* *Theories of Surplus-Value* (Part II), Karl Marx. Trans. and ed. S. Ryazanskaya. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968 (15-596).
- S-V III* *Theories of Surplus-Value* (Part III), Karl Marx. Trans. Jack Cohen and S. Ryazanskaya, ed. S. Ryazanskaya and Richard Dixon. Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1971 (12-540).
- WL & C* *Wage Labour and Capital*, Karl Marx. Ed. Frederick Engels. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow (27-79).\*
- WPP* *Wages, Prices and Profit*, Karl Marx. Foreign Languages Press, Peking, 1970 (1-79).
- YM* *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*. Ed. L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat. Doubleday, New York, 1967 (35-267).

NOTES: i. Unless otherwise stated, italics within excerpts from the above texts are added.  
 ii. All further references to the original German of these texts are from the *Marx-Engels-Werke* (Volumes 1-39): Dietz Verlag, Berlin, 1956-1968.

## The Structure of Marx's World-View



## Introduction

Karl Marx's philosophy of the human condition is as celebrated for the charges made against it as for the claims it advances. Four generations of Western economists, philosophers, historians, sociologists, and political scientists—among others—have questioned, criticized, and vilified its formulations. But perhaps the most persistent and discomfiting reproof issued against it is that it is wildly confused.

Marx, it is held, articulated his doctrine ambiguously and loosely, if not incoherently. Thus the British philosopher, H. B. Acton, concludes his definitive critical study, *The Illusion of the Epoch*, with the trenchant decision that Marx's theory is, simply, "a philosophical far-rago."<sup>1</sup> In much the same vein, Professor Sidney Hook, who now opposes Marx's doctrine with as much conviction as he once defended it, charges that "Rigorous examination is one thing Marx's ideas will not stand because they were not rigorously formulated."<sup>2</sup> Even the very sympathetic C. Wright Mills laments that Marx's theory is "full of genuine murk" and "contains much that is . . . ambiguous or inadequate."<sup>3</sup>

The range of eminent scholars censuring Marx for muddle and confusion extends across the disciplines. The charge of pervasive "ambiguity," for example, is laid against Marx's conceptual scaffolding by such various figures as Raymond Aron in his *Eighteen Lectures on*

<sup>1</sup> H. B. Acton, *The Illusion of the Epoch* (London, 1955), p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Sidney Hook, *Marx and the Marxists: The Ambiguous Legacy* (New York, 1955), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Marxists* (New York, 1962), pp. 102 and 130, respectively.

*Industrial Society*,<sup>4</sup> Bertram D. Wolfe in his *One Hundred Years in the Life of a Doctrine*,<sup>5</sup> and Pitirim Sorokin in his *Contemporary Sociological Theories*.<sup>6</sup> Economist M. M. Bober utters much the same objection when he holds that Marx's work is "obscure, careless in expression and contradictory";<sup>7</sup> while the historian Karl Federn voices his criticism more forcefully still: "The vagueness and indistinctness of Marxian terminology," he remarks, is "deplorable."<sup>8</sup> In short, there exists a broadly established and expert opinion that Marx's theory ruinously wants in clarity and form.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Aron, *Eighteen Lectures on Industrial Society*, trans. M. K. Bottomore (London, 1967), p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Bertram D. Wolfe, *Marxism: One Hundred Years in the Life of a Doctrine* (London, 1967), p. xxiii.

<sup>6</sup> Pitirim Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York, 1928), p. 527-39.

<sup>7</sup> M. M. Bober, *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), p. 297.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Federn, *The Materialist Conception of History* (London, 1939), p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> i. Marx's abilities as a thinker were not always so discredited in the academy. The leading German philosopher, Moses Hess, had this to say about him in 1842, when he was not yet a revolutionary: "He is the greatest, perhaps the one genuine philosopher now alive and will soon . . . draw the eyes of all Germany. . . . Dr. Marx—that is my idol's name—is still very young (about twenty-four at most) and will give medieval religion and politics their *coup de grace*. He combines the deepest philosophical seriousness with the most biting wit. Imagine Rousseau, Voltaire, Holbach, Lessing, Heine and Hegel fused into one person—I say fused, not thrown together in a heap—and you have Dr. Marx." (Reported in Isaiah Berlin's *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, New York, 1959, pp. 72-73.)

ii. In recent years, the dismissal of Marx's work by Western scholars has been less monolithic than in the past. Continental "critical theorists" and "structuralists," for example, along with a pluralist Anglo-American "new left," have together constituted a growing academic fifth column against the settled opinion of Marx's irredeemable "confusion." However, the thing most needed here, a direct, propositionally precise delineation of Marx's complete explanatory model, has been altogether missing. We seek to meet this need in the following chapters, adhering rigorously throughout to Marx's own, and not secondary Marxist, work in our reconstruction.

This judgment seems justified by the enormous number and variety of interpretations of Marx's work. Perhaps no corpus since the Holy Scriptures has been so kaleidoscopically construed.

There are radically different opinions, for example, on what Marx's position actually is on ontology (is he really a philosophical materialist, and if so, what kind?), epistemology (is he a naive realist, a pioneering pragmatist, or what?), ethics (what is its nature and place, if any, in his thought?), methodology (positive or normative?), the dialectic (metaphysical or heuristic?),<sup>10</sup> political theory (anarchist, democratic, or totalitarian?), and so on. Then, giving rise to many of these general problems, the focal categories of his historical materialist theory—"forces of production," "relations of production," "superstructure," and so forth—are themselves subject to widely various and, many say, impossible difficulties, as we will presently see.

Any serious inquirer into Marx's thought, then, cannot help but be bemused by the situation on which he finds himself. On the one hand, the texts with which he is concerned are said to be full of conceptual muddle

<sup>10</sup> We take this opportunity to state, from the outset, that this study will not presume acceptance by the reader of dialectical method, but on the contrary will apply its terminology only where nondialectical explanation is already in force. In this manner, passage through a notorious stumbling block to the understanding of Marx's theory will be negotiated, and the sense of controversial dialectical terms (e.g., "contradiction") clarified on the way.

Furthermore, our study will establish that there are limitations to the standard dialectical interpretation of Marx's thought: demonstrating, for example, that laws of correspondence rather than contradiction, and of strict determinism rather than reciprocal indeterminism, are the primary principles of his theory. In this way, the well-known metaphysics of "dialectical materialism" (a term Marx never once used, but which has dominated Marxist thought for almost a century) will be shown as, at best, an incomplete framework for understanding his science of human society and history.

while, on the other, there seems to be no end of problems associated with his system's fundamental positions and categories. In approaching his theory, thus, one might be excused for feeling somewhat like a worker at the building of Babel. Confusion seems everywhere.

It is for this reason, on the face of it, that Marx's work has been dismissed by the mainstream of Anglo-Saxon philosophical thought as unworthy of sober attention. When a century of scrutiny has failed to understand what its central categories mean or what its stance is on the most basic philosophical issues, it must be, the thought seems to go, because the work in question is a sham, a fantasy, or, as Acton puts it, an "illusion." Thus in a summational judgment of this mainstream, the illustrious index of its fashion, A. J. Ayer, pronounces Marx's philosophy a nonentity. "As for Marxist philosophy," he declares, "it does not exist."<sup>11</sup>

Let us, however, risk dupery, and consider Marx's thought directly, if only to determine the parameters of our problem.

Before *The German Ideology* (1845-1846), Marx's thought is still in a formative stage. The now famous *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*—written in 1844-1845, when Marx was twenty-six years old—is the most instructive case in point. Though these writings offer a fascinating insight into Marx's developing thought, and some of the most poetic and suggestive remarks he ever utters, they are in the end manuscripts, and full of the loose ends and conceptual vagary one might expect of such a form.<sup>12</sup> Even with *The German*

<sup>11</sup> This judgment (reported in the British journal, *Radical Philosophy*, No. 7, Spring 1974, p. 1) is by no means atypical of the mainstream in question. Though such judgment might not seem at all in accordance with this same mainstream's pride in empiric sense, this does not seem to have inhibited its prevalence.

<sup>12</sup> We do not conclude from this, however, that the *Manuscripts*

*Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto*, the reader is still confronted with a somewhat unfinished theory: still primarily concerned with refuting others, still composed in collaboration with Frederick Engels,<sup>13</sup> still in the stage of sweeping new principles not yet firmly set.

It is generally agreed that the Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*—published in 1859—gives us the framework of Marx's overview in the most compressed and lucid form it ever assumes in his work. By this stage, Marx's theory could be said to have attained a thoroughgoing maturity. It is worth citing more or less in full:

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the guiding thread of my studies, may be formulated briefly as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of

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are somehow out of line with Marx's "mature" work. Though such a view is widespread among communist party theorists who find the humanist emphasis of the *Manuscripts* somehow superannuated by the nomic emphasis of *Capital*, we find no reason to share this view. On the contrary, we hold the humanist and the nomic emphases of Marx, his early *Manuscripts* and his later *Capital*, to be inseparable and complementary aspects of his thought whose disjunction is theoretically unnecessary and seriously misleading.

<sup>13</sup> Before proceeding further, let us make a position of the study clear. We have adopted the methodological standpoint that Marx is not Engels. Though the contrary seems supposed by those who regard their work as one, we infer from their intimate association no such conflation. Thus, we will include in our reference writings coauthored by Marx and Engels, but not writings authored by Engels alone. See Chapter 7 for demonstration that Engels, despite his breadth of learning and sentential pith, is simply not on the same level as Marx as a thinker.

society—the real foundation, on which the legal and political superstructure arises and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the social, political, and spiritual processes of life in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production in society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for them—with the property relations within which they had been at work before. From forms of development of the forces of production these relations turn into their fetters. Then occurs a period of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations, the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be established with the precision of a natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophical—in short, ideological—forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; rather, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order ever disappears before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed, and

new, higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society. Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such problems as it can solve; since, on closer examination, it will always be found that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions necessary for its solution already exist or are at least in the process of formation.<sup>14</sup>

The structure of Marx's theory that can be analysed out of this passage is constituted of the following essential categories:

1. forces of production (*Produktivkräfte*)
2. relations of production (*Produktionsverhältnisse*)  
or, speaking holistically, the economic structure (*ökonomische Struktur*)
3. legal and political superstructure (*juristischer und politischer Überbau*)
4. ideology (*ideologische Formen*)
5. forms of social consciousness (*gesellschaftliche Bewusstseinsformen*)

<sup>14</sup> This is a reproduction of Bottomore and Rubel's standard translation (*Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, Harmondsworth, 1961, pp. 67-68), with minor alterations. For example, we have changed their improper translation, "the general character of the social political and ideological processes of life" in the fourth sentence.

It will also be observed that we have deleted Marx's concluding few sentences on the Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and bourgeois modes of production. We have done so for two reasons, the first following from the second: 1. the remarks in question are not relevant to our stated enterprise, and 2. the notion of history falling into four progressive stages of production—what K. Popper mistakenly thinks is the postulation of an inalterable "predetermined path" of history (*Poverty of Historicism*, London, 1955, p. 51)—is one Marx only tentatively suggests here and, as he explicitly insists elsewhere, does *not* involve the postulation of a "general path every people is fated to tread" (S.C. 379).

Before advancing our analysis further, it is important to note that we have distinguished “ideology” from “forms of social consciousness,” a distinction that is not conventionally made by commentators on Marx, though Marx himself makes it, and though it is of signal significance to his theory (see Chapter 6).

Marx also draws attention in the above passage to several fundamental relationships (relationships that he discusses and elaborates in one way or another throughout his work) that obtain among the five identified classes of phenomena:

- i. The relations of production/economic structure correspond (*entsprechen*) to a definite stage of development of the forces of production, except in prerevolutionary periods, when they “fetter” these forces.

- ii. The forms of social consciousness correspond (*entsprechen*) with the relations of production/economic structure, as do (as Marx says elsewhere and suggests here) the legal and political superstructure and ideology.

- iii. The “mode of production” (that is, for Marx, the forces and relations of production together)<sup>15</sup> determines the social, political, and spiritual processes of life, that is, the legal and political superstructure, ideology, and forms of social consciousness.

For the purposes of economy and simplicity, we reduce, without loss, these three relationships to two:

- 1) Relationship (i), plus that aspect of relationship (ii) that applies to productive forces alone, together constitute one complex relationship between productive forces and the rest of the categories of phenomena identified in Marx’s overall theoretical framework. This

<sup>15</sup> Marx sometimes refers only to the forces of production with this phrase. Nonetheless, the term seems usually to refer to both forces and relations of production, and so we have taken such usage as standard.

complex relationship we henceforth designate *technological determinism*.

2) Relationship (ii) which, with respect to the influence of relations of production/economic structure, seems merely repeated in (iii), constitutes the second major complex relationship in Marx's overall theoretical framework: that is, the relationship between relations of production/economic structure and the rest of the general categories of phenomena indicated above. This second, equally important relationship we henceforth designate *economic determinism*.

The resolution of the sociohistorical process into the above five factors and the two fundamental relationships held to obtain between these factors constitutes the essential substance of Marx's historical materialist world-view. Precisely what Marx means by each of his seminal categories, however, and exactly how he construes the two basic relationships are matters that have aroused over a century of claimed bewilderment. Greatly intensifying the general criticisms of extreme confusion in Marx's thought, every one of these central categories has been attacked by critics as ill conceived, while the basic relationships held to exist between their referents have been more vigorously censured still. Very briefly, the standard objections that have been urged against Marx in these connections are as follows.

1. His basic category, "forces of production," is a riddle. To begin with, these forces of production seem to be inseparable from the "relations of production." For example, if we consider a force of production such as a fishing vessel, we can see that it not only involves a complex of technical instruments and skills, but very definite relations as well among the people required to run it—that is, among helmsman, cabin boy, crew, captain, and so forth. Apart from such organizational rela-

tionships, the fishing boat is not really a productive force at all, but a chaotic collection of tools and skills. But if forces of production must in this way involve relations of production, then Marx's central idea, that they are separate factors in the social process, is patently untenable.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, there exists as great a difficulty in distinguishing these productive forces from the institutional and ideological "superstructure." For since the productive forces require laws to safeguard their operation, and since they require ideas by virtue of their very existence as agencies of purposive fabrication, they seem thereby ultimately inseparable from the laws and ideology of the superstructure, too.<sup>17</sup> In sum, Marx's "forces of production" category collapses under analysis into intolerable conceptual amorphousness.

2. What the term "relations of production" means is more problematic still. It could mean technological relations of the type indicated in (1); ownership relations, as is suggested in the Preface by Marx's remark that "property relations" are but a "legal expression for" production relations; market-place relations; several of these at the same time, or nothing at all.<sup>18</sup> If it means the first, the problem outlined in (1) arises. If it means the second, the distinction between the "essential" production relations and legal superstructure falls to the ground. There is no textual evidence to indicate that it

<sup>16</sup> This is a paraphrase of H. B. Acton's argument in *The Illusion of the Epoch*, pp. 159 ff.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 164-67, for an example of this form of criticism.

<sup>18</sup> John Plamenatz (*Man and Society*, II, London, 1968, pp. 280 ff.) argues that Marx's production relations must be equivalent to property relations; H. B. Acton that they also include market-place relations; Irving Zeitlin (*Marxism: A Re-examination*, Princeton, 1967, p. 64) that they involve both work and property relations; and Patrick Gardiner (*Theories of History*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1960, p. 132) that they are simply "not clear."

means the third, and if it means several relations at the same time or is just obscure, then Marx is guilty of having either confused or bluffed us. In short, the most crucial category of Marx's theory—the relations of production—is a cipher. As Acton puts it, Marx leaves us in "the devil of confusion."

3. What is meant by the "legal and political superstructure" is also unclear. On the one hand, such a superstructure overlaps with the relations of production in the manner described in (2). That is, the property relations prescribed by the superstructure are indistinguishable from the production relations constituting the economic base.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the institutional superstructure penetrates so deeply into the operation of the productive forces—every production process is subject to some rules and laws of a nontechnological sort—that it is not possible to conceive the two as separable.<sup>20</sup> Because, then, the legal-political superstructure is involved in some way in both the productive forces and relations, Marx's view of it as a distinct social factor seems a piece of conceptual conjury.

4. The notion of "ideology" or "ideological forms" is no less muddled. It could mean all ideas, just unscientific and/or false ideas, those ideas that favor the ruling class, or both these latter.<sup>21</sup> If the first sense is the one

<sup>19</sup> Plamenatz develops this point most successfully in *Man and Society*, p. 280 ff.

<sup>20</sup> This point is made by each of C. Wright Mills (p. 106), Raymond Aron (p. 48), H. B. Acton (p. 167), and G. H. Sabine (*A History of Political Theory*, London, 1963, p. 786).

<sup>21</sup> R. N. Carew-Hunt (*The Theory and Practice of Communism*, London, 1962, p. 48) holds that Marx locates all ideas in the ideological superstructure; Louis Althusser (*For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster, London, 1969, p. 231) defines ideology by distinguishing it from science; and John Plamenatz (p. 323 ff.) claims that Marx variously describes ideology as ideas in general, just normative or unscientific ideas, false ideas, and idea favoring the ruling class.

Marx intends, then there is an obvious difficulty in understanding the character of the productive forces, which would seem, thereby, to be construed as arising and functioning in some mysterious manner without the mediation of ideas. If the second, narrower, sense is intended, there is the problem of conceiving how the productive process could carry on without some "unscientific" ideas—of good and bad, for instance—accompanying, guiding, and motivating the actions of the men concerned. If the third sense is meant, then there is the task of determining what criterion is to be employed in ascertaining whether or not an ideological form "favors" the ruling class; for example, under what criterion is the commandment "love thy neighbor as thyself" to be construed as a ruling class idea? And if it is the final sense that Marx has in mind, there is the difficulty of showing that an idea that favors the ruling class is also necessarily false and/or unscientific.<sup>22</sup> In brief, Marx's concept of ideology is (in Professor Plamenatz's words) "extraordinarily confused."

5. What are "forms of social consciousness"? No one, so far as we know, has subjected this concept to analysis, doubtless because it has been assumed to be synonymous with "ideology." But Marx suggests that it is distinct from the latter (*GID*, 37), though he never explains how nor, indeed, gives us any explicit characterization of it at all. So what is its meaning? It may, unlike the other categories, have escaped critical notice; yet as we remain without any sense for it, it is no less problematic.

6. The complex relationship denoted by "technological determinism" is no more illuminatingly conceived. For example, the nature of the "correspondence" be-

<sup>22</sup> Carew-Hunt makes the first of these objections (p. 48), Acton the second (p. 178 ff.), and Plamenatz (p. 330 ff.) the last.

tween productive forces and the relations of production/economic structure is unclear. If production relations are interpreted as purely technological relations obtaining between men at work, then there is indeed a correspondence between such relations and the productive forces, but only because the former are included in the latter. Since under this interpretation the claim in question is merely a disguised tautology, Marx must mean something else. But if he means that production relations in another sense—that is, the sense of property relations—“correspond” to the productive forces, he may escape the Scylla of tautology only to end in the Charybdis of error; for, as Raymond Aron among others has argued, “there may be exactly the same technical organization of agricultural production whether the land is the individual property of a great landowner, the collective property of producers’ co-operatives or the property of the state.”<sup>23</sup> Then there is the further problem of which of the two “corresponding” factors Marx claims as primary. There is sufficient ambiguity to his position that commentators have adopted opposite interpretations.<sup>24</sup> In other words, yet again the general theoretical framework of Marx’s work seems shot through with confusion.

7. Finally, the “economic determinism” relational complex—that is, relations of production/economic structure determining the legal and political superstructure, ideology, and forms of social consciousness—is problematic in the extreme. Indeed, one can say without much hesitation that no area of Marx’s work has earned

<sup>23</sup> Aron, *Eighteen Lectures*, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> Sidney Hook, for example (*Towards an Understanding of Karl Marx*, London, 1933, pp. 126 and 156), urges the primacy of the production relations; whereas Georgi Plekhanov (*The Development of the Monist View of History*, Moscow, 1956, p. 207) just as firmly opts for the productive forces.

so much and so vigorous critical attack. To cite all the objections that have been made might require more space than the remainder of this study. However, the standard arguments are that the relationship network in question involves a naive monocausality;<sup>25</sup> that it denies all human freedom and moral responsibility;<sup>26</sup> that it is persistently incompatible with actual history;<sup>27</sup> and that it is committed to logically absurd prediction.<sup>28</sup> In short, this core complex of Marx's thought abounds in reported disorders.

There seems, then, no part of the essential structure of Marx's thought that is not a shambles. However, there is yet another major problem. A prominent part of the critical literature on Marx argues that the theory's very ontological substructure is a vacuity. That is, Marx's mature world-view or general theoretical framework is said to be altogether devoid of a position on the nature of man himself, the ultimate historical agency whose constituting properties underlie everything to which Marx refers. This is the area of what is conventionally called "human nature," and Marx's inquiry into the material foundations of history is said by many—both hostile and sympathetic to his work—to completely extrude from consideration such a factor. Louis Althusser, a self-described Marxist, approvingly calls this extrusion of human nature from his post-1845 work, Marx's "theoretical anti-humanism."<sup>29</sup> Robert Tucker, on the other hand, a non-Marxist who disapproves, agrees that

<sup>25</sup> For example, R. M. MacIver and Charles H. Page, *Society: An Introductory Analysis* (Toronto, 1965), p. 563.

<sup>26</sup> Isaiah Berlin articulates the most famous version of this argument throughout his *Historical Inevitability* (London, 1957).

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>28</sup> This is Karl Popper's central point in *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1961), especially pp. v-vii.

<sup>29</sup> *Lire le Capital*, II, Paris, 1967, pp. 32-34; *For Marx*, pp. 255 ff. Althusser's extremely influential position is that Marx's "mature"