

Marx as a Critical Discourse Analyst: The genesis of a critical method and its relevance to the critique of global capital

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ABSTRACT In this paper we identify elements in Marx's economic and political writings that are relevant to contemporary critical discourse analysis (CDA). We argue that Marx can be seen to be engaging in a form of discourse analysis. We identify the elements in Marx's historical materialist method that support such a perspective, and exemplify these in a longitudinal comparison of Marx's texts.

KEYWORDS Marx • Critical Discourse Analysis • Transdisciplinary analysis

Introduction

This paper has developed as one part of a wider project: the critique of language in new capitalism. By 'new capitalism' we mean the emergent form of capitalism, variously referred to as 'globalisation', 'the global economy', 'the knowledge economy', 'the information society', and so forth. It is the form of capitalism which is currently emerging as a new and dominant form of social organisation on a global scale (Jessop, 2000). Amongst its more salient characteristics are the importance of international and 'global' institutions, and the ways in which the actions of such institutions are integrated with national, regional and local scales; and more particularly, a systemic emphasis on commodifying the most intimate aspects of human existence, including thought, language, attitudes, and opinions (Graham, 1999, 2000).

There are various ways in which language and other discursive artefacts (for instance, imagery) are of greater importance to this new socio-economic formation than to its predecessors. Let us for instance briefly pursue this argument with respect to its 'knowledge-based' nature. The very idea of a 'knowledge-based' economy, and its counterpart 'information society', entails a discourse-based economy and society, in the sense that these more or less valuable knowledges are inevitably produced, exchanged and consumed as discourses. Put more plainly, more or less valuable knowledges presuppose more and less valued ways of knowing, which are always institutionally defined as such in discourse (Graham, 1999, 2000). Moreover, the cycle of knowledge production, exchange, and consumption includes on the one hand the 'operationalization' of knowledges (discourses) as social practices, as ways of acting and interacting; and on the other hand the 'inculcation' of knowledges (discourses) as ways of knowing one's self and the world, as ways of being, as identities (Graham, 2000, p. 141).

Language is intricately involved throughout this cycle: the operationalization of discourses, includes the creation of new genres through 'generic chaining', or generic convergence (Fairclough, 2000); the subtle but profound effects wrought by new ways of mediating linguistic and discursive exchanges (Graham, 2000); and the

inculcation of discourses, including the creation of new styles, new discursive ways of being, knowing, and having; and new artefacts and institutions of knowledge (Fairclough 2000; Graham 2000). At every point in this cycle, language is both implicated and exposed as a decisive element. The diffusion, operationalization and inculcation of discourses is crucial in the integration of different scales of economic activity. If the socio-economic order is discourse- and language-based in this sense – and we must assume it is – understanding of it, resistance to it, and struggle against it must also incorporate a significant discursive element (Melucci 1996). We shall not attempt an extended rationale for the critique of the new capitalism here – we assume that readers will be familiar with evidence of alarming disparities between, on the one hand familiar claims to enhance human progress, welfare, poverty-relief, and so forth through “economic growth”, and on the other hand an increasingly pronounced gap between rich and poor, declining economic and social standards for millions if not billions of people, major damage to both ecological systems and the social fabric, and so forth (cf. Bauman, 1998; Graham, 1999; Hart, 1999; Jessop, 2000; Kennedy, 1998; Saul, 1997). The important point to make for this paper is that the critique of the new capitalism is incomplete without a significant element of language critique. One might say the same about any form of capitalism, or indeed about other socio-economic systems. But if the resources of discourse, and in particular language, do indeed, as we suggest, carry more weight in the constitution and reproduction of the emergent form of global capitalism, then language critique becomes correspondingly more important.

Why then go back to Marx? It is uncontentious that Marx’s critique of capitalism has been the single most substantial and influential critique, and we believe that Marx’s method remains important in understanding the emergent new capitalism. What has not been sufficiently recognized however is the significant place of critique of language in the critical method which he applied to capitalism. Indeed, we argue that Marx’s method includes elements of what is now generally known as ‘critical discourse analysis’. Our aim in looking at Marx as a discourse analyst ‘avant la lettre’ is first of all to establish this, and secondly to ask whether there are insights we can take from Marx which are of theoretical and/or methodological value in developing a critical analysis of language as part of the contemporary critique of capitalism. We shall argue that there are. We believe that this sort of critique should start from a view

of language as an element of the material social process which is dialectically interconnected with other elements (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999, Fairclough 2000, Graham 1999, 2000) - that the production of social life (both economic production and production in non-economic domains) is based within the articulation together of diverse elements and aspects of sociality into relatively stable configurations which always essentially and inherently include language (or more generally, discourse). This view stands in contrast with the predominant approach to the sociality of language within linguistics, which has consisted in a double movement of first abstracting language from its material interconnectedness with the rest of social life, treating language as an “ideal” and non-material entity, and then construing the sociality of language as relations ‘between’ language – so constituted as an object of linguistic theory and analysis – and society, as if these were two separately constituted realities which subsequently, or even accidentally, come into contact with each other. What emerges in particular from our reading of Marx is precisely his emphasis on the dialectical interconnectivity of language and other elements of the social which we believe is an essential basis for a form of language critique which can do full justice to social power of language in new capitalism without reducing social life to language, removing language from material existence, or reifying language.

Of course, to speak of Marx’s method as if it were a monolithic and homogenous ‘thing’ is to do a great violence to the perspective. His approach was profoundly transdisciplinary, many-faceted, and ever-changing, both drawing on and inspiring studies in political theory, political economy, jurisprudence, philosophy, social theory, anthropology, and historiography. Further, to view the whole of Marx as a theoretical monolith is to ignore or disallow the development of thought and the path of self-clarification common to any intellectual career. Here we examine Marx’s development with the assumption that it can, at least in part, be viewed as the development of a critical understanding of just how central language is to social organisation, social change, and to the reproduction of social forms, as well as to understanding relations between these phenomena.

Critical Discourse Analysis: A brief overview

The perspective from which we approach the wider research project and the reading of Marx is ‘critical discourse analysis’ (Fairclough 1992, 1995, Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) analyses language as ‘discourse’, which we take to mean that language is conceived as one element of the social process dialectically interconnected with others along the lines sketched out above. It is a ‘critical’ analysis of discourse in that it sets out precisely to explore these often opaque dialectical interconnections within the tradition of critical social science. That is, it shares the concern of critical social science to show how socio-economic systems are built upon the domination, exploitation, and dehumanisation of people by people, and to show how contradictions within these systems constitute a potential for transforming them in progressive and emancipatory directions. In our understanding, CDA differs from other critical (eg Foucaultian, “post-modern”, “post-structural”, “social constructivist”, etc) approaches to discourse in its view of spoken, written, and multimediated texts. CDA views texts as a moment in the *material* production and reproduction of social life, and analyses the social ‘work’ done in texts as a significant focus of materialist social critique.

CDA builds upon ‘critical linguistics’ (Fowler et al 1979) by centering the conceptualization of language as ‘discourse’ and more explicitly locating critical language analysis within critical social science (Fairclough 1989, 1992). Critical linguistics and CDA have both been shaped by Marxism, especially twentieth century ‘western Marxism’ (Fairclough & Wodak 1997). Although the analysis of language in relation to the power relations and ideologies of capitalism has been a concern throughout, there has more recently developed a particular concern with contemporary processes of socio-economic change and the ways in which language figures within them (Fairclough 1992, 2000; Graham 2000). The ‘language in new capitalism’ project (Fairclough et al 2000) is currently giving a tighter focus to this work, and a more explicit political orientation, linking CDA more closely to contemporary analyses of the form and contradictions of new capitalism, and the forms of resistance and struggles for change which are developing in response to it.

Critical research on new capitalism is, by nature and necessity, interdisciplinary. We envisage critical discourse as working within such a conjunction

in a ‘transdisciplinary’ way (Fairclough 2000); that is, entering a dialogue with other disciplines, theories, and methods, putting their logic to work in developing critical discourse analysis as a theory and method in relation to the particular object of research. The relationship between object of research, theory, and method is conceived of as a dynamic relationship, not a matter of pre-existing theory and method being ‘applied’ to a new object, but of theory and method (in our case, the theory and method of critical discourse analysis) evolving in the encounter with the object of research, whose construction is in turn ongoingly developed through this process of evolution. Marxism and the work of Marx in particular is obviously a significant partner-in-dialogue for critical discourse analysis given the focus on capitalism. We therefore see this paper as initiating a process of putting a Marxist logic to work in developing critical discourse analysis as theory and method to enhance its capacity to address the object of research.

It may help to clarify our broader objectives and approach if we compare them to their recent work on ‘language ideology’ (Woolard and Schefflin, 1994) in anthropological linguistics, especially the recent work by Bauman and Briggs (2000) in their study of the language ideologies of Locke and Herder. They see the language philosophies of Locke and Herder as contrasting, but in some ways complementary, language ideologies tied to projects of regulating the ‘metadiscursive order’ – controlling the social distribution and hierarchisation of forms of discourse – within the wider project of legitimizing the emergent bourgeois social order, including its exclusions and inequalities. Their objective is ‘to increase our reflexive understanding of the historical foundations of modern ideologies of language and metadiscursive practices more generally’ (p. **). Bauman and Briggs’ focus on contributions of philosophy to the constitution of metadiscursive regulation obviously contrasts with, but is perhaps complementary to, our focus on contributions of theory to the critique and, more importantly, to the transformation of the current global capitalist order. Our overall objective is clearly different: it is to increase our understanding of what language critique can contribute, not only to understanding, but also to transforming, contemporary capitalism through exploring how Marx applied language critique to the capitalist order of his day.¹

We proceed by outlining the origins and development of Marx's method, highlighting the explicit and implicit role of language as his method matures over the course of a life. We draw these elements together by focusing on examples from six of Marx's works. A caveat to this paper is that it is *not* a critical analysis of Marx's discourse. Rather, it is an exposition of the elements in Marx that we believe can contribute theoretically and methodologically to CDA, and, more specifically, to CDA's contribution to the transdisciplinary project of critically engaging contemporary capitalism.

Marx, classical scholarship, and language: An historical contextualisation

Critics of Marx who suggest that he lacked a systematic 'theory of language' (e.g. Cook, 1982, p. 530; Lepschy, 1985) overlook the nature of nineteenth century scholarship. While much attention has been directed towards understanding the historical links between Kant, Hegel, and Marx (e.g. Adorno, 1973, 1994; Bloom, 1943; Cook, 1982; Hook, 1928a; Warminski, 1995), little attention has been given to the broader historical tapestry in which these writers appear as pivotal figures in the history of western thought (Bloom, 1943). The contributions of Marx, Hegel, and Kant cannot be understood without taking into account the enduring influence of classical scholarship in general (Bloom, 1943). Nor can we grasp the centrality of language critique to Marx's method without taking into account nineteenth century scholarship in general, and, in particular, his philosophical and juridical education in Germany at a time when Hegel's philosophy was considered to be a revolutionary intellectual force (cf. Bloom, 1943; Colletti, 1975, p. 46; Hook, 1928, p. 114; Tucker, 1972, pp. xvii-xviii). An understanding of language was central to scholarship during the time Marx studied. It was, in fact, the foundation of classical scholarship (Adorno, 1973, p. 56, 1994, pp. 18-21, pp. 116-118; Cook, 1982, p. 530; Grote, 1872).

In the following section, we outline three conceptual elements that are central to understanding the discursive aspects of Marx's critical method. The elements we have chosen to highlight are: the doctrine of *abstraction*, Aristotle's conception of *dialectic*, and the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century conceptions of *ideology*, the philosophical counterpart of post-revolutionary political economy in France and

Germany. When we trace these themes out in their historical significance, what we find in Marx's formulation is an intense mixture of naturalism and humanism intertwined with a fundamentally discursive approach to analysing social phenomena.

The 'doctrine of abstraction' and its significance to Marx's thought

Hegel substitutes the act of abstraction revolving within itself for these fixed abstractions; in so doing he has the merit, first of all, of having revealed the source of all these inappropriate concepts which originally belonged to separate philosophers, of having combined them and of having created as the object of criticism the exhaustive range of abstraction rather than one particular abstraction. We shall later see why Hegel separates thought from the subject; but it is already clear that if man is not human, then the expression of his essential nature cannot be human, and therefore that thought itself could not be conceived as an expression of man's being, of man as a human and natural subject, with eyes, ears, etc., living in society, in the world, and in nature. (Marx, 1844/1975, p. 398)

While much is made of Marx's materialist critique of Hegel, rarely is it acknowledged that it merely extends a debate that has continued for thousands of years (Colletti, 1975, pp. 22-24). The very earliest written record we have in the Western tradition of antagonism between idealism and materialism can be found in Aristotle's arguments against Plato's 'ideal forms' (Colletti, 1975, p. 24; Grote, 1872, pp. 29-30; Lawson-Tancred, 1998, p. xxvii).² It is here that we find Aristotle deploying the concept of abstraction in an attempt to reconcile "ideal" and "material" aspects of human existence. The notion of 'abstraction' as being essential to human cognition has its origin in Aristotle's materialist critique of Plato's idealism.³ Central to Aristotle's rebuttal of idealism is his insistence that the 'Forms of material things are not separate realities, yet we seem to be able to consider them without considering the matter or without considering other concrete features of material things' (Weinberg, 1968, p. 1). This of course was in contradiction to Plato and his followers who held that form had a separate existence from matter, and that humans were able to these separate aspects because of knowledge gathered during a previous existence, thus rendering a theory of abstraction unnecessary (p. 1). Aristotle argued against this, claiming that because 'form and matter are joined in physical objects', a theory of abstraction is 'both possible and necessary' (p. 1).⁴ Aristotle's materialist theory of cognition is the foundation upon which the scholastics developed their 'doctrine of abstraction' (p. 2).

The doctrine remained the fundamental tool for reasoning about questions of cognition throughout the height of the scholastic period, persisting throughout the enlightenment and beyond (McKeon, 1928, pp. 425-426). It was also an object of contention, and thus underwent all the usual twists and turns that such pivotal ideas do (Randall, 1940). Descartes' ontological dualism owes its existence to the doctrine of abstraction, as does Kant's theory of the *a priori*.⁵ Logical positivism is similarly derived. But essentially, Aristotle's formulation, as it was passed down by the scholastics, remained intact until Hegel reshaped it in a very specific way: by adding the concept of genesis – change over time. This was in contradistinction to doctrinaire abstraction, as it was most fully developed by the scholastics, which was concerned with the immutable and Universal attributes of isolated *things*, the Universal characteristics of objective matter. Hegel, on the other hand, added the dimension of social time – history – and formulated a theory of abstraction that assumed the effects of dynamic, antagonistic, and antithetical *social processes* throughout history, thus bequeathing us the concept of the evolving 'Idea' (Hook, 1928, p. 117; Marx, 1844/1975, p. 398, McTaggart, 1893).

The significance of Hegel's contribution cannot be overestimated. Rather than being confined to a dry logic of "things", Hegel reshaped the static tool of abstraction into a dynamic system that describes how universal categories *themselves* evolve over time (McTaggart, 1893, p. 490).⁶ For Hegel, this change over time – this evolution of historical consciousness – was a matter of thought becoming conscious of itself *through* dynamic, contradictory, and interdependent processes of abstraction working upon themselves, the historical culmination of which is to be 'Absolute Knowledge or Spirit knowing itself as Spirit' (Hegel, 1807/1966, p. 808).⁷ History is thus 'the process of becoming in terms of knowledge, a conscious self-mediating process – Spirit externalized and emptied into Time' (p. 807). The 'goal' of History is 'the revelation of the depth of spiritual life' (p. 808).

It is precisely these "mystical" aspects in Hegel that drive Marx's pivotal critique of idealism. For Hegel, 'self-realising self-consciousness', the historical movement of abstract thought, determines the course of human history (Marx, 1846/1972, p. 118). For Marx the opposite is true: human life – social activity –

determines the form, nature, and consequences that our conscious abstractions take (Marx, 1846/1972, p. 118; Warminski, 1995, p. 118).⁸ But Marx's is no simple inversion of Hegel, 'that is what the Young Hegelians do and what he criticizes them for' (Warminski, 1995, p. 120). His approach is, rather, 'a full-scale "deconstruction" of both consciousness *and* life and the "relation" between them' (1995, p. 120). But for Marx, language and *social* consciousness are identical – 'language *is* practical consciousness' (1846/1972, p. 122); the one cannot be practically distinguished from the other:

Language does not transform ideas, so that the peculiarity of ideas is dissolved and their social character runs alongside them as a separate entity, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas do not exist separately from language. (Marx, 1857/1973, p. 163)

For Marx, Hegel's (1910) *Phenomenology* is 'concealed and mystifying criticism' because it hides the social character of our ideas, the social nature of shared abstractions (Marx, 1844/1975, p. 385). But he sees that Hegel has grasped an important feature of abstraction: *genesis*, 'the moving and producing principle', the dynamic, processual, intrinsically productive nature of human social activity which, once given a materialist orientation, is the basis of Marx's critical method (1844/1975, p. 386).

Dialectics: Outlines of a method

Dialectics—literally: language as the organon of thought—would mean to attempt a critical rescue of the rhetorical element, a mutual approximation of thing and expression, to the point where the difference fades. Dialectics appropriates for the power of thought what historically seemed to be a flaw in thinking: its link with language, which nothing can wholly break [...]. Dialectics seeks to mediate between random views and unessential accuracy, to master this dilemma by way of the formal, logical dilemma. But dialectic inclines to content because content is not closed, not predetermined by a skeleton; it is a protest against mythology. (Adorno, 1973, p. 56)

The classical formulation of dialectical method is a relational, socially grounded approach to analysing assertions. Its methods and categories are derived from language in use, from 'common speech'; its objective is to challenge "common sense" (Grote, 1872, pp. 385-390). In ancient Greece, it has been argued, dialectical method was the essence of 'free speech and free thought', and thus was considered to be the essence of democracy (Berti, 1978). If Hegel's dynamic treatment of abstraction is the foundation of Marx's theoretical perspective, Aristotle's dialectic

may be viewed similarly as his analytical method. As defined by Aristotle, dialectic is a critical linguistic method formulated to challenge the dogmas of received wisdom (Adorno, 1973; Grote, 1872, p. 384). A crucial aspect of Aristotelean dialectic is its relational logic.⁹ Various misunderstandings of relational logic have led to antithetical, ‘substantialist’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 4) readings of important categories in Marx’s work, ‘social class’ for example. From a relational perspective, any property we care to identify as a significant ‘distinction’ in social life, including social class, ‘is nothing other than *difference*, a gap, a distinctive feature, in short, a *relational* property existing only in and through its relation with other properties’ (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 6).¹⁰ Bourdieu’s relational logic, like Marx’s, is fundamentally Aristotelean.

In its classical form, dialectical argument is organised around Aristotle’s Categories, the most fundamental of these being *Entia* (Grote, 1872, p. 90). ‘*Entia*’ are defined relationally within propositions, and while the term has a rough correspondence to “Essences” or “Substances”, it is best viewed as a *gradation* of essences, as “more and less essential” essences (Grote, 1872, p. 90; Lawson-Tancred, 1998, pp. xxviii-xxvix).¹¹ But the most important of the Categories is *Relation*. Considered in the most comprehensive sense, all of Aristotle’s categories ‘are implicated and subordinated to Relation’, even the fundamental category of “essence” (Grote, 1872, pp. 115-120). Relation, ‘understood in the large sense which really belongs to it, ought to be considered as an Universal, comprehending and pervading all the Categories’ (p. 120). Relations in Aristotle are organised around the concept of *Relata* (pp. 100-104). *Relata* are ‘*of other things*, or are said to be in some manner *towards something else*’ (p. 100). They are ‘so designated in virtue of their relation to another *Correlata*; the master is master *of a servant* – the servant is servant *of a master*’ (Grote, 1872, p. 101; cf. also Hegel, 1807/1966, pp. 228-240; Marx, 1844/1975b). *Relata* and *Correlata* are mutually defining; they are ‘*simul naturâ*. If you suppress one of the pair, the other vanishes’ (Grote, 1872, p. 102). It is no selective contrivance on our part that we choose to highlight the relational aspect of Aristotle’s system. Aristotle describes Relation, ‘not as one amongst many distinct Categories, but as implicated with all the Categories’ (Grote, 1872, p. 126).¹² And this primacy of the relational in Aristotle can also be clearly seen throughout Marx.

Dialectical arguments, then, are primarily concerned with language. They have ‘for their province words and discourse; they are ... powers or accomplishments of discourse’ (p. 384). The objects of dialectic are ‘Endoxa’, ‘premises, propositions and problems’ which are ‘borrowed from some one among the varieties of accredited or authoritative opinions’ – from ‘a particular country’, ‘an intelligent majority’ or from ‘a particular school of philosophers or wise individuals’ (p. 383).¹³ They are found ‘exclusively in the regions of ... received opinions’, and are supported to varying degrees by ‘the mass of opinions and beliefs floating and carrying authority at the same time’ (p. 389). In any given community, endoxic propositions are often contradictory, and will have many meanings and interpretations within that community. They are an important focus for dialectical investigation for precisely this reason. Each individual, as they mature, ‘imbibes these opinions and beliefs insensibly and without special or professional teaching ... and it is from them that the reasonings of common life ... are supplied’ (1872, p. 385). In other words, endoxa form the basis of what we call “common sense”.¹⁴ Dialectical argument ‘searches for a “counter syllogism” of which the conclusion is contradictory ... to the [endoxic] thesis itself’ (p. 390).¹⁵ The primary function of dialectic is that of ‘dissipating the false persuasions of knowledge’ based on fallacious first principles or taken-for-granted, commonsense beliefs and assumptions (p. 391). The subject matter may be ‘ethical’, ‘physical’, or ‘logical’ (Grote, 1872, p. 394).¹⁶

Abstraction again becomes significant when we encounter the human “essence” in Marx. That is because Marx does not regard it as some vague, immutable, and constant ‘abstraction inherent in each individual’ (Marx 1845/1975, p. 423). The reality of the human ‘essence’ is, rather, a dynamic set of relationships, ‘the ensemble of social relations’ in which each person is embedded (Marx, 1845/1975, p. 423). Aristotle defines “essences” under ten categories.¹⁷ The most noteworthy aspect of the categories is, though, *how* Aristotle develops them. He considers them ‘in their *relation* to Propositions; and his ten classes discriminate the relation which they bear to each other as parts or constituent elements of a proposition’ (Grote, 1872, p. 94). Even more significantly for socially grounded linguistics, the categories are drawn from ‘common speech; and from the dialectic ... which debated about matters of common life and talk, about received and current opinions’ (pp. 94-95). Aristotle’s

Categories are derived from language-in-use within specific social contexts. They are sociolinguistically derived.

“Essences” may be either abstract or concrete, but in Aristotle, ‘Abstract alone can be predicated of abstract; concrete alone can be predicated of concrete. If we describe the relation between the abstract and the concrete, we must say, The Abstract is in the Concrete—the concrete contains or embodies the Abstract’ (Grote, 1872, p. 91). But Marx, like Hegel before him, is concerned with showing the historical relationship between abstract and concrete aspects of human experience through the deployment of dialectical argument (Hook, 1928, pp. 120-123).¹⁸ The aim of dialectic is not to discover truth, but rather to ‘convict an opponent of inconsistency’ and to propose counter assertions (p. 385). The method is designed to investigate the common meanings – the accepted assumptions, definitions, and understandings – of a given subject by way of investigating the received, authoritative statements about it. It proceeds by laying out the orthodoxies of, for instance, a particular science, into its accepted propositions; differentiating between the various uses and meanings of these; and showing the relationships of these parts to the whole subject matter.

The dialectical method that Marx deploys should be confused with the *reductio ad absurdum* carried on by the late scholasticism of the counter-reformation (cf. McKeon, 1928; Saul, 1992, 1997). Rather, it is as an expression of what we know as ‘scientific method’ (Randall, 1940). The ‘free thinkers’ among the scholastics, especially those in the school of Padua, developed through dialectic method, a method based on the ‘careful analysis of experience’ that ‘left their hands with a refinement and precision ... which the seventeenth century scientists who used it did not surpass in all their careful investigation of method’ (Randall, 1940, p. 178). In this sense, “scientific method” and “critical method” are identical. Both are founded, dialectically, on a healthy skepticism towards common sense, dogma, and taken-for-grantedness. At their very foundation they are relational and dynamic, social and empirical linguistic methods. Critical praxis stands opposed to what is now often called “ideology”, but which has *always* been the dominating myths propagated by vested interests (Adorno, 1973, p. 56; Horkheimer & Adorno 1947/1998, p. 20). This

brings us to a central and overt object of Marx's critical engagement with language: ideology.

Ideology: Language, social consciousness, and language critique

The term "ideology" has for some time been understood as "false consciousness", "ruling class ideals", "belief systems", "mistaken common sense", "religious dogma", or something similar (see *e.g.* Bergmann, 1951; Burks, 1949; Huxley, 1950, p. 10; Kennedy, 1979, p. 353, Lipset, 1966; Roucek, 1944, p. 479; Sartori, 1969). However, ideology was conceived of in the first instance as an intellectual discipline to fill the perceived void left by the Church's moral authority and the scholastic system's associated monopoly on knowledge in post-Thermidorian France (Kennedy, 1979; Roucek, 1994). As such, it dominated the last few years of eighteenth century France, and continued as a dominant influence for the first half of the nineteenth century throughout Western Europe, including Italy and Spain, even having considerable influence in the United States (Kennedy, 1979, pp. 362-364; Roucek, 1944, p. 482).¹⁹ As a terminology and an intellectual project, "Ideology" was initially conceived of by Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836) with the explicit purpose of dominating the whole human intellectual environment, including the fields of morality, political economy, physics, calculus, and, ultimately, politics proper (Kennedy, 1979, pp. 356-358). Tracy intended that ideology should replace theology as the 'queen' of human intellectual endeavour (Kennedy, 1979, p. 356). Its formulation was an attempt to stabilise post-revolutionary France in the very image of the Enlightenment:

At stake was a whole political and social philosophy, a conservative post-Thermidorean liberalism of a part of the propertied class, an Ideology which was strongly materialist in its conception of the relationship between the physical and the moral. (p. 356).

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Ideology was a much-contested movement, especially in the social and political sciences of France and Germany. 'Ideology' was meant literally as the 'science of ideas' (Kennedy, 1979, p. 355). It was first announced as such by Tracy in 1796, with a full social, political,

educational, and economic agenda later being published by him in a four-volume work in 1805 (Kennedy, 1979; Roucek, 1944, p. 482). Late eighteenth century scholars associated with the movement searched to unite political economy, moral philosophy, and the liberal arts to develop ‘a sound “theory of the moral and political sciences” which embraced grammar, logic, education, morality, and “finally the greatest of arts, for whose success all the others must cooperate, that of regulating society”’ (Kennedy, 1979, p. 355; cf. also Neill, 1949). And that was *Ideology*, a liberal science of human thought with the ultimate purpose of regulating social morality. Its central focus was language and its relationship to thought (Kennedy, 1979, pp. 364-366).

In the genesis of Marx’s method, his critique of *The German Ideology* (1846/1972) is the point at which his relational social logic, his materialist perspective on dynamic abstraction, and his conception of socio-historical transitivity as productive human activity are first fully expressed. *The German Ideology* marks a watershed in Marx’s intellectual project. It synthesises and summarises his political, economic, historical, social, and philosophical positions; it contains a statement of the first principles of Marx’s political economy; and it is the beginnings of the “mature” Marx. Not surprisingly, it is here that we find Marx formulating his most explicit and sustained treatment of language and consciousness as material processes of production, as aspects of the social production process which are inherently bound up in the totality and materiality of human experience.

Marx’s much referred to comments about language in *The German Ideology* (1846/1972) are best seen as a critical response to the idealist, alienated conceptions of language and consciousness widely propagated by the formal ‘ideologists’, or, in the Napoleonic perjorative, ‘ideologues’, of the day, particularly those associated with Tracy. The French ideologists had their German counterparts in the “Young Hegelians”, led in the early nineteenth century by Bruno Bauer (1809-1882) and Max Stirner (1806-1856). It is the Germans who are the main targets of Marx’s critique. In Germany, the “Young Hegelians” developed their own “science of ideas” based on Hegel’s philosophy and his intensely conservative conceptions of the state. Ideology, both in its French and German formulations, was essentially a legitimising discipline

comprised of ‘Natural Order’ apologists for the French and Prussian aristocracies of the day (Kennedy, 1979; Marx, 1846/1972; Neill, 1949).

Marx and formal ideology were contemporaries.²⁰ He saw ideology as a contrivance by vested interests to fill the moral void left by the diminished influence of the Church and “Divine Right” monarchies, and *a fortiori* their socially sanctioned authority. The intentions of ideology’s earliest proponents, ‘a group of propertied intellectuals in power after Thermidor’, was to ‘transform and stabilize post-revolutionary France’ by supplanting the eroded authority of the Church and the Monarchy with the study of ideology (Kennedy, 1979, p. 358). The express focus of ideology was language and its relationship to thought: ‘[w]e can never pay too much attention to the illusions which certain words produce. Nothing proves better how vague and confused their meaning is’ (Tracy, 1805, in Kennedy, 1979). For the most enthusiastic of the French School, ‘Ideology’ was to be ‘the torchlight of grammar’ (Lemare, 1812, in Kennedy, 1979, p. 363). Marx’s perjorative construal of ideology, which includes references to the French and German schools in *The German Ideology* (1846/1972), *Grundrisse* (1857/1973), and *Capital* (1976, 1978, 1981), comes ‘not from Hegel ... but only from the cumulative usages current in the 1830s and 1840s and specifically from Destutt De Tracy’ (Kennedy, 1979, p. 366). *The German Ideology* firstly critiques ideological conceptions of the relationship between language, consciousness, social life, and “civil society”.

The ideologists had emphasised the unity of language and thought, language being for them a system of arbitrary signs, the externalised artefacts of thought ‘abstracted from time and men’ (Frank, 1844, in Kennedy, 1979, p. 364). For Tracy, ideas are ‘the only things that exist *for us*, the only means we have to know things’ (Kennedy, 1979, p. 364).²¹ Hegel is identical to the French ideologists in his conception of language and thought:

The strictly raw material of language itself depends more upon an inward symbolism than a symbolism referring to external objects; it depends, i.e. on anthropological articulation, as it were the posture in the corporeal act of oral utterance. For each vowel and each consonant accordingly, as well as for their more abstract elements ... and for their combinations, people have tried to find the appropriate signification.

But these dull subconscious beginnings are deprived of their original importance and prominence by new influences, it may be by external agencies or by the needs of civilization. Having been originally sensuous intuitions, they are reduced to signs, and thus have only traces left of their original meaning, if it be not altogether extinguished. As to the formal element, again, it is the work of analytic intellect [*Verstand*] which informs language with its categories: it is this logical instinct which gives rise to grammar. (Hegel, 1830/1998, p. 306)

Marx held an almost opposite perspective on the relationship between language and thought:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourses of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc — real active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest form. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process (Marx 1846/1972: 118).

For Hegel, language functions to externalise the internal and intuitive state of isolated individuals. It is ‘the imagination which creates signs’, and these signs are language (Hegel, 1833/1998, p. 303). In Hegel’s ideology, meaning made in language moves from abstract intuition and imagination to symbolise and particularise already universalised meanings (i.e. a system of already-thought-of abstractions), ‘reason’ being the universalizing force, mechanism, or system into which the categorical effects of language “fit” (p. 305). Language, as a system of signs, is ‘a product of intelligence’, and ‘gives to sensations, intuitions, conceptions, a second and higher existence than they naturally possess - invests them with the right of existence in the ideational realm’ (Hegel, 1833/1998, pp. 303-305; cf. also Hegel, 1807/1966, ***).

Hegel's view is that the *written* word drives language forward to 'perfection' (1833/1998, p. 307). He derides the 'hieroglyphic mode of writing' for keeping the 'Chinese vocal language from reaching that objective precision which is gained in articulation by alphabetic writing' (p. 307). Alphabetic writing 'is on all accounts the more intelligent: in it the word – the mode, peculiar to the intellect, of uttering its ideas most worthily – is brought to consciousness and made an object of reflection' (p. 307). But for Marx, language is firstly a social and material phenomenon, not the reified object of abstract speculation. It is, rather, a dynamic social product that emerges from the material relationships between people and their social and material environments: 'language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men' (1845/1972, p. 122). For Marx, meaning travels in entirely the opposite direction from Hegel.

Similarities can be seen between the German ideologists and the hard-line social-constructivist school that rose to prominence in the last quarter of the twentieth century in western social theory:

Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men ... it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against these illusions of consciousness. Since, according to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical, or egoistic consciousness, and thus removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness amounts to demands to interpret reality in another way, i.e. to recognise it by means of another interpretation. (1846/1972, p. 113)

Like the latter-day constructivists, the Young Hegelians find themselves at war with "phrases". They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world' (p. 113). Marx is clear that 'the language of real life' - a many-sided metaphor for social *praxis* - is materially implicated in a reciprocally causal relationship with the whole of social life, including

language in the abstract, its categories, and the social relations in which these are produced by people.

These are the foundations, history, and context of Marx's critical approach. It is a critical praxis that views productive processes, not as merely or exclusively 'economic' activities, but more precisely, as the network of social activities by which societies reproduce themselves at every level: materially, socially, relationally, consciously, economically, and *linguistically* (Graham, 2000, p. 137). The dialectic is Marx's method of analysis. A materialist approach to the problem of abstraction is his theoretical underpinning. Language, consciousness, and praxis are considered to be in an inseparable relationship of 'causal reciprocity' (Hook, 1928a, p. 124). Combined, the theoretical and methodological tools outlined here provide a critical, linguistic, *propositional* method of analysis, the main purpose of which is to challenge the taken-for-grantedness of common sense ideas about human life, precisely by *beginning* with human life rather than deducing it *a posteriori* from eternal ideas. Dialectical materialism 'is what Aristotle becomes when modified by Hegel and Darwin. It is an emergent naturalism with a strong anti-religious flavor struggling with the problem of "time"' (Hook, 1928a, p. 122).

Language critique is thus central to Marx's approach; an historical, materialist, critical understanding of language is the very foundation of his method. But language is not a separate or independent "thing" for Marx, not the object of decontextualised contemplation. The transitivity of the clause and the transitivity of human social life are predicated of one and the same subject: *human social activity*, 'the language of real life'. Critical language analysis is central to Marx's method precisely because language is the only way we have of grasping the diachronics of changing social circumstances – not language as an abstract system of signs, but as a mutually determining product and substance of changing material circumstances and practices; not as the abstract representative of externalised ideas, but as both product, producer, and reproducer of social consciousness, which in turn is in a reciprocally causal relationship with the whole of the human experience. In these very important respects, Marx's method and the methods of CDA are identical.

Language Critique in the Development of Marx's Method

We now discuss a number of Marx's texts - two economic texts (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 1844/1975, and *Capital* [vol 1], 1867/1976), two political texts (*Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State*, 1843/1975; *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875/1972), and an historical analysis (*Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1851-2/1972). The aim here is twofold. First, to discuss the development of Marx's critical method in terms of how language critique figures within it, especially with reference to the economic texts. Second, to illustrate how Marx deploys critical linguistic analysis in different ways in different types of text – economic, political, and historical.

Throughout the early Marx, through to the *Grundrisse*, we can clearly identify elements of a classical Aristotelian method, especially in the predominance of specific analytical and taxonomic terminologies: “subjects and predicates”; “Ens”, “genus”, and “species”; “differentia and semblances”; “accidents and errors in language”, and so on.²² A longitudinal shift in Marx's method can be seen in both his political and economic texts. In the earlier economic texts, up to and including the *Grundrisse* (1857-8), Marx deploys the method we have outlined above: a close reading and dialectical critique of the texts of the classical political economists. In his mature work, *Capital*, his own alternative to the theory of the political economists is presented. This does not mean that texts of the political economists do not figure in *Capital* – there are many quotations, especially in the footnotes – but they have a different role, and there is less explicit critique of the language of the texts. At this point, it he uses the words of classical political economy, as well as parliamentary reports and submissions, as either ‘documentary proof’ of his assertions, or as ‘a running commentary to the text, a commentary borrowed from the history of economic science’ (Engels, 1883, in Marx, 1976, p. 108).²³ We begin our exposition with a political text, *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* (1843/1975).

Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State

Marx's much-refined Aristotelian method, one that is immediately recognisable as such, is especially evident in Marx's early works. Following is a passage from

Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State in which Marx deploys a classic dialectical method, directly and critically engaging one of Hegel's texts (Hegel's is the first paragraph, italics are in the original):

[§ 267] 'This *necessity* in ideality is the inner *self-development* of the Idea. As the substance of the individual *subject*, it is the ***political sentiment*** [patriotism]; in distinction therefrom, as the substance of the *objective* world, it is the *organism* of the state, i.e. it is the strictly political state and its *constitution*.'

The subject here is 'necessity in ideality', the 'inner self of the Idea', the *predicate* – *political sentiment* and the *political* constitution. In plain words this means: *political sentiment* is the subjective substance of the state, the political constitution its *objective substance*. The logical development from the family and civil society to the state is, therefore, mere *appearance* as we are not shown how family and civil sentiment, and family and social institutions, as such are related to political sentiment and political institutions. [...]

The crux of the matter is that Hegel everywhere makes the Idea into the subject, while the genuine, real subject, such as 'political sentiment', is turned into the predicate. The development, however, always takes place on the side of the predicate. (Marx, 1843/1975, p. 65, italics in original)

This critique appears to be almost entirely logico-grammatical in its approach. Marx critiques Hegel for what seems like a grammatical error. More precisely, though, it is a critique of Hegel's idealistic inversion of reality: "the Idea" is forced erroneously into the position of 'subject', which is clearly understood here by Marx as an *active, transitive* entity, and an entity *definable* as such by its logical position and its 'development' in the text. Hegel is mistakenly asserting agency for "the Idea" rather than for a 'genuine, real subject', 'political sentiment', for instance. It is worth noting here that Marx is careful to firstly engage Hegel within the realm of abstraction; he avoids asserting in the first instance that 'the political constitution' ought to be predicated of family, civil sentiment, social institutions, and the relations between these, thus avoiding predicating abstract qualities of concrete relations in a single step, according to the traditions of dialectical critique (Grote, 1872, p. 91).²⁴ He chooses instead to take Hegel on his own terms, that is, entirely in the realm of abstraction.

Even here, he points out that Hegel is mistaken: “political sentiment” ought to be subject and “the state” its predicate – abstract object predicated *of* abstract subject; the “state” as manifest “political sentiment”.

This brief fragment of critical analysis achieves a threefold effect. First, Marx identifies the agency that Hegel typically and erroneously attributes to “the Idea”. Second, he proposes the correct logical abstract relations of Hegel’s proposition. Third, Marx formulates the concrete, materialist alternative: that the *real* relations, which Hegel reduces to ‘mere *appearance*’, an illusory expression of ‘the Idea’ at work, are to be found in the relationships between ‘family and civil sentiment’ and ‘family and social institutions’ to ‘political sentiment and political institutions’. This shows quite clearly that Marx is not merely inverting Hegel. He does that in the first move by rearranging subject and predicate, *by firstly* rearranging the relations in Hegel’s proposition, and then by framing the *materialist form of the problem*. Rather than attempting to reveal relations between abstract subjects and predicates in a single step, Marx presents an emergent, materialist formulation of the problem. He presents “family”, the smallest social institution of society, in its relation to ‘civil sentiment’ on the one hand, and to ‘social institutions’ on the other, as the correct formulation of the problem.²⁵ We see, then, that Marx is indeed concerned with investigating ‘both consciousness *and* life and the “relation” between them’ (Warminski, 1995, p. 120). Warminski’s scare quotes around *relation* denote the fact that Marx does not see consciousness and life as separate “things”, even though consciousness in particular is a clearly definable aspect of human life in general.²⁶ For Marx, life, language, social activity, and consciousness are essential and inseparably related aspects of human phenomena in terms of materiality and causality. By noting this, we are concerned again with stressing Marx’s materialist perspective on meaning-making and its inseparability from human experience in all its aspects. Designating concrete relations in terms of “subjects” and “predicates” is for Marx, quite clearly, the act of asserting historically dynamic, causal, reciprocal, co-extensive relations amongst elements in language, and consequently amongst the elements of human life itself.

Aristotle directs the dialectician to investigate propositions in a particular way: they are to be put in the most general terms possible and stated as Universal if they are

generally believed to be true (Grote, 1872, p. 401). They are then to be reduced as far as possible into their particulars. But this is not to be done in a single step, ‘not at once as separate individuals, but as comprised in subordinate genera and species; descending from highest to least divisible’ (Grote, 1872, p. 413).²⁷ Both Hegel and Marx clearly deploy such an approach in their critical analyses. Here, Marx is again testing Hegel’s assertions about the constitution of the State (Hegel’s words are in the quotation marks):

(1) ‘This *organism* is the differentiation of the Idea into various elements and their objective reality.’ It is not argued that the organism of the state is its differentiation into various elements and their objective reality. The real point here is that the organism of the state is its differentiation into various elements and their reality is *organic*. The *real differences* or the *various aspects of the political constitution* are the presupposition of the subject. The predicate is their definition as *organic*. Instead, the Idea is made into the subject, the distinct members and their reality are understood as its development, its result, whereas the reverse holds good, viz. that the Idea must be developed from the real differences. The organic is precisely the *Idea of the differences* and their ideal determination.

(2) Hegel, however, talks here of the *Idea* as of a subject that becomes differentiated into *its* members. Apart from the reversal of subject and predicate, the appearance is created that there is an idea over and above the organism. The starting point is the abstract Idea which then develops into the *political constitution* of the state. We are not concerned with a political Idea but with the abstract Idea in a political form. The mere fact I say “this organism (i.e. the state, the political constitution) is the differentiation of the Idea into various elements etc.” does not mean that I know anything about the *specific idea* of the political constitution; the same statement can be made about the organism of an *animal* as about the organism of the *state*. How are we to *distinguish* between *animal* and *political* organisms? Our general definitions do not advance our understanding. An explanation, however, which fails to supply the *differentia* is *no* explanation at all (Marx, 1843/1975, p. 67)

Here is another formal term of Aristotelian dialectic by which propositions are separated into to their constituent parts: *differentia* (Grote, 1872, p. 417). But this should be understood as dynamic differentiation, the *real* and transitive splitting of a whole into its constituent parts over time, and conversely, the emergent formation of

constituents into “wholes”, in language as in life. Closely related to this is the concept of *organic* relations between constituent elements, ‘predicates’, of the ‘subject’.²⁸ In short, these are the Participant-elements of the state which stand in logically necessary and constitutional relationships with each other and with the state; the state *emerges* from the relations between these human elements. Thus, according to the argument Marx is putting forward against Hegel, any assertions about the nature of the state should be deduced from the differences between its constituent parts, and, as a corollary of this, from the nature of the essential relationships between these elements. The *organic* is thus the *ideal* expression of the sum total of all relations *within* the state between the different constituents *of* the state. Hegel does not go far enough. He stops at the most general of terms, failing even to differentiate between the *organic* nature (constituents) of, for instance, *animals*, and the organic nature of the state. Hegel is admonished for his *misuse* of abstraction, as well as for his failure to show the real constituent parts of these.

By absolutising the Idea, Hegel *objectifies* human consciousness, he attributes abstract ideas with historical agency, a phenomenon most clearly expressed in the dogmas of religion (1844/1975, pp. 382-385). Hegel’s idealism, like contemporary neoliberal economics, reduces real human history, real human activity, to a purely theoretical abstraction, a universalised *Idea* which can have no meaningful relation to particular people because it is a closed system of abstractions which can only refer to its own insubstantial and circular elements. In such a system

Real man and real nature become mere predicates, symbols of this hidden, unreal man and this unreal nature. Subject and predicate therefore stand in a relation of absolute inversion to one another; a *mystical subject-object* or *subjectivity encroaching upon the object*, the *absolute subject* as a *process*, as a subject which alienates itself and returns to itself from alienation, while at the same time re-absorbing this alienation, and the subject as this process; pure, ceaseless revolving within itself. (p. 396)

Here, we see further allusions to language in what seems like quite a metaphorical form: humanity and nature become ‘predicates’ of the ‘subject’, which is ‘*God, absolute spirit, the self-knowing and self-manifesting idea*’ (p. 396). Marx then

reconstrues 'subject' to expose the tension between passive and active elements in the relationships implicit in Hegel. Hegel's subject [self-realising self-consciousness] stands in a conflated relationship with its object [humanity *in the abstract*, i.e. as already-thought-of, *theoretical* humans]. In asserting a relationship between the *Universal Idea* and the abstract Idea of thinkers, Hegel in fact *separates* real thought from real thinkers, leaving a pure abstraction, the *Idea*, as the motivating force of history. Hegel's conflated 'subject-object' is thus devoid of meaningful content: because it is

nothing more than the *abstract, empty* form of that real living act, its content can only be a *formal* [i.e. abstract] content, created by abstraction from all content. Consequently there are general, abstract *forms of abstraction* which fit every content and are therefore indifferent to all content; forms of thought and logical categories torn away from *real* mind and *real* nature. (pp. 396-397)

His subject, the *Absolute Idea*, with its historical universe of dependent predicates – namely abstract humanity *and* abstract nature – is thus separated from its source, humans actively thinking (and, presumably, speaking, acting, and so on). Hegel's subject therefore has *no* meaningful content because it can only refer to a constituency of abstract aspects of itself, all of which stand in a pre-defined relationship with the abstract subject, the *Idea*. Here again we find oblique allusions to language: *abstractions that are indifferent to all content, logical categories and forms of thought* torn from their realities. Marx is both critiquing Hegel's theoretical discourse, and indicating an alternative way of constituting a theoretical discourse, i.e. through identifying the relationships, the interconnected and mutually defining activities, of real life.

In engaging Hegel's assertions about the State, Marx develops in incipient form the foundational elements of his critical method. And, in identifying the historical significance of Hegel's dynamic understanding of abstraction, he formulates the rationale for his materialist method:²⁹

Hegel's positive achievement in his speculative logic is to present *determinate concepts*, the universal *fixed thought-forms* in their independence of nature and mind,

as a necessary result of the universal estrangement of human existence, and thus also of human thought, and to comprehend them as moments of abstraction (p. 397). [...]

But nature too, taken abstractly, for itself, and fixed in its separation from man, is *nothing* for man. It goes without saying that the abstract thinker who decides on intuition, intuits nature abstractly.³⁰ Just as nature lay enclosed in the thinker in a shape which even to him was shrouded and mysterious, as an absolute idea, a thing of thought, so what he allowed to come forth from himself was simply this *abstract nature*, nature as a thing of thought Or, to put it in human terms, the abstract thinker discovers from intuiting nature that the entities he imagined he was creating out of nothing, out of pure abstraction, in a divine dialectic, as the pure products of the labour of thought living and moving within itself and never looking out into reality, are nothing more than *abstractions from natural forms*. (pp. 398-399)

By investigating the way in which Marx engages Hegel's idealism regarding the State, we can see that many of the foundational concepts that Marx deploys in his critique of political economy later on are developed using the elements of language critique that we have outlined above (abstraction, dialectic, and ideology): alienation; conceptual fetishism; objectification and reification; the labour process; labour as an all-embracing conception of productive human activity; and the primacy of material reality, including social reality, in determining consciousness — all of these aspects can be identified in incipient form in Marx's critical engagement with Hegel's idealist discourse on the politics of the State.

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts

We now move to the First Manuscript of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844/1975). This marks an important turning point in Marx's work, and not merely in terms of his new focus upon political economy. He brings the conceptual elements incipient in the critique of Hegel (objectification, alienation, conceptual fetishism, the labour process) to bear upon the problems of political economy. Marx gives his own account of what he is doing in much of the *Manuscripts*, especially in the first part. We can see that he proceeds from the "endoxa", the received wisdom, of classical political economy, explicitly confining his empirical investigation 'to the propositions of political economy' in order to

challenge its foundational assertions and formulate a contradictory thesis, or, in the formal terminology of dialectic, “counter syllogisms”, of his own (Marx, 1844/1975, p. 315). We receive further explicit evidence that Marx is engaged in language critique from the Preface of the Manuscripts:

It is hardly necessary to assure the reader who is familiar with political economy that I arrived at my conclusions through an entirely empirical analysis based on an exhaustive critical study of political economy. (***)

By ‘political economy’, Marx means the texts of the political economists. There is an oscillation of voices in the Manuscripts which is sometimes difficult to keep track of (Carver 1998): there are many quotations from the political economists, and there is Marx’s own voice, which is sometimes echoing the political economists, sometimes critiquing them. What sort of critique is this? We argue that it is a critical analysis of what would nowadays be called the discourse of the political economists, which sometimes refers to their language, sometimes to their ‘propositions’, ‘arguments’, ‘presuppositions’. At all levels of analysis, though, Marx keeps the socially positioned and conditioned representations of capitalism made by political economy in view.

The *Manuscripts* begins with a section on ‘The Wages of Labour’ which at first is purely in Marx’s own voice and which hardly refers to the political economists, other than paraphrasing Smith (1776/1997, 1776/1998) briefly. This introductory section is a summary of the conclusions he draws about wage labour in *Excerpts from James Mill’s “Elements of Political Economy”* (1844), the original version of which contains a total of 97 quotations from Mill.³¹ Then Marx writes: ‘Let us put ourselves now wholly at the standpoint of the political economist, and follow him in comparing the theoretical and practical claims of the worker’. Much of the pages which follow consists of Marx’s own representations of “what the political economist tells us”, or extracts from the political economists, sometimes with minimal connecting linkages from Marx. For the most part, according to dialectical method, we are hearing the political economists ‘in their own words’. But there are also some critical recontextualisations from Marx. For example, he writes at one point: ‘Let us now rise above the level of political economy and try to answer two questions ...’ (***)

The section numbered VII, 1-3 consists of a summary of claims of ‘the political economist’ about labour, set out in a pattern of concessional + main clauses which highlight contradictions in the political economists’ discourse:

Whilst according to the political economists it is solely through labour that man enhances the value of the products of nature ... according to this same political economy the landowner and the capitalist ... are everywhere superior to the worker and lay down the law to him. (***)

Here, we see Marx highlighting conflicting views of the relationships that define Capital as a form of social organisation. Marx concludes this set of contradictory claims as follows: ‘But that labour itself, not merely in present conditions ... is harmful and pernicious follows from the political economist’s line of argument, without his being aware of it’ (***) . Marx is drawing a conclusion from the arguments and the words of the political economists which is implicit in them, a conclusion which the political economists were not aware of, and which ‘rises above the level of political economy’ (‘transcends’ it in Hegelian terms). It is a conclusion which is highly contradictory to the arguments of Smith, Mill, Ricardo, etc, .

Marx uses the same technique in subsection (4) of the section headed ‘The Profit of Capital’. He critiques the political economists by showing the contradictions in their own words with respect to their claim that

the sole defence against the capitalists [and against monopoly] is competition, which according to the evidence of political economy acts beneficently by both raising wages and lowering the prices of commodities to the advantage of the consuming public’ (***) .

This is dialectical argument, on the basis of quotations from the political economists, aimed at producing a counter-syllogism to that of the political economists, namely that competition leads to its opposite, monopoly; that ‘competition among capitalists increases the accumulation of capital ... the concentration of capital in the hands of the few’; and that ‘if labour is a commodity, it is a commodity with the most unfortunate characteristics’ because it is doomed to reduce its own worth along with those of other commodities as productivity increases. Marx notes later that although ‘the doctrine of competition’ in political economy is ‘opposed’ to ‘the doctrine of

monopoly’, competition is an ‘accidental, deliberate, violent consequence’ of monopoly, and not its ‘necessary, inevitable, and natural’ consequence.³² Today’s monopolistic global megaliths, institutional and corporate, which preside over the most systematic, overt, and pronounced social inequalities in history, continue to propound the doctrine of monopoly in precisely the manner Marx is criticising here. Marx’s critique of classical political economy discourse also holds true for its contemporary counterpart. Marx’s earliest critique remains relevant.

The section headed ‘Rent of Land’ includes a discussion of feudal landed property (XVII-XVIII). Here, Marx’s relational logic is foregrounded. The ‘essence’ of feudal landed property is the ‘domination of the land as an alien power over men. The serf is the adjunct of the land. Likewise, the lord of an entailed estate, the first-born son, belongs to the land’ (***)). In terms of the Aristotelian method of dialectic discussed earlier, the serf and the lord are ‘predicates’ of the essence, its co-defining ‘relata’ and ‘correlata’, without which feudal relations could not exist. But the illusory ‘appearance’ expressed in these relations is ‘a more intimate connection between the proprietor and the land’, and between the lord and the serf. It does not ‘appear directly as the rule of mere capital’ (***)). The ‘appearance’ of this form of social organisation is ‘expressed’ in the language, ‘*nulle terre sans maître*’ (***)).³³ The foundation of the Lord-Serf relationship is the blending of land and master, the personification of feudal land as the Lord who carries the name of the land (***)), and as such belongs to *it*. As objects of the land, Lord and Serf are feudalism’s socio-historical enactment. However, for capital, ‘it is necessary that this appearance be abolished – that landed property ... be dragged completely into the movement of private property and that it become a commodity; that the rule of the proprietor appear as the undisguised rule of private property’ (***)).

‘Appearance’ here is shifting ‘forms’ which the ‘essence’ of feudal organisation (the domination of the land as an alien power over people) takes, at first ‘disguised’ then ‘undisguised’. It is also how the feudal property relationship ‘appears’ to the people whose relationships define it as such, as their consciousness of these historical relationships. The dynamic process of landed property in the movement from feudalism to capitalism – from land as “common weal” to land as

private property, the foundation of Capital – leads to ‘the abolition of the distinction between capitalist and landowner’, the relationship between its ‘essence’ and its ‘forms’ of ‘appearance’, how they ‘appear’ to people, and the language in which these ‘appearances’ is ‘expressed’. Marx’s account grasps the interconnection between land and capital as forms of property relations in their historical movement, rather than just registering ‘appearances’ (temporary forms, forms given to consciousness in the social practice of historically entrenched relations, including the language in which these are expressed and defined). He shows, in reality, that the qualitative transformation from feudalism to capitalism is a relational and institutional transformation which in effect removes the illusion of personal domination to reveal the rule of ‘thing over person’ which lies latent in the appearance of feudalism:

the rule of person over person now becomes the universal rule of the *thing* over the *person*, the product of the producer. Just as the *equivalent*, value, contained the determination of the alienation of private property, so now we see that *money* is the sensuous, corporeal existence of that *alienation*. (p. 270)

The final section of the First Manuscript is headed ‘Estranged Labour’. It is a critique of commodification and alienation. Marx begins:

We have started out from the propositions of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We presupposed private property; the separation of labour, capital and land, and likewise of wages, profit and capital; the division of labour; competition; the concept of exchange value, etc. From political economy itself, using its own words, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity, and moreover the most wretched commodity of all; that the misery of the worker is in inverse proportion to the power and volume of his production; that the necessary consequence of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands and hence the restoration of monopoly in a more terrible form; and that finally the distinction between capitalist and landlord, between agriculturalist worker and industrial worker, disappears and the whole of society must split into the two classes of *property owners* and *propertyless workers*. (p. 322)³⁴

This passage from the *Manuscripts* again highlights the dialectical and relational foundations of Marx’s method of language critique. Starting with the *propositions, language and laws* of political economy, which construe the move to a capitalist

economy as inherently triumphalist (a familiar theme in today's global order), Marx presents an alternative view of the historical move from feudal relations to capitalist ones, and the critical implications thereof. He also presents three foundational and essential aspects of his later critical formulation in *Capital*: class antagonism based on ownership rights; the commodification of productive human activity; and, as a corollary to these, the alienation of labour itself, its belonging to someone, or more importantly some *thing*, else.

Listed later in the section: 'the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, unworthy, he becomes', etc. These are the realities – the laws of political economy are mere euphemistic explanations, mistakes of *comprehension*:

It [political economy] does not *Comprehend* these laws -- *i.e.*, it does not show how they arise from the nature of private property. Precisely because political economy fails to grasp the interconnections within the movement, it was possible to oppose, for example, the doctrine of competition to the doctrine of monopoly, the doctrine of craft freedom to the doctrine of the guild, and the doctrine of the division of landed property to the doctrine of the great estate; for competition, craft freedom, and division of landed property were developed and conceived only as accidental, deliberate, violent consequences of monopoly, of the guilds, and of feudal property, and not as their necessary, inevitable, and natural consequences. (***)

And later in the section: 'Political economy conceals the estrangement in the nature of labor by ignoring the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production.'

Marx's repeated criticism of political economy here is that it 'fails to grasp the interconnections within the movement' – it fails to give a dynamic account of relationships that give rise to its analytical abstractions, which are merely 'appearances' and 'expressions' of deeper relationships. It is a failure in the discourse of political economy – a problem of socially positioned representation, a problem of its misappropriation and recontextualisation of the world in political economic discourse. Therefore,

We now have to grasp the essential connection between private property, greed, the separation of labor, capital and landed property, exchange and competition, value and

the devaluation [*Entwertung*] of man, monopoly, and competition, etc. -- the connection between this entire system of estrangement [*Entfremdung*] and the *money* system.

Marx goes on to give an extended account of how the worker is alienated in capitalist production – alienated from the product of labour, from him/herself (‘self-estrangement’), from common humanity (‘species-being’), and from other workers by the intermediation of money and property relations. The alienated relationship of workers to what they produce, their consciousness of themselves and each other, the relationship between work and capitalist, private property, wages, etc are all shown to be interconnected facets and effects of the social relations and processes entailed by capitalist production.

What can CDA take from this? The critique of political economy is fundamentally a critique of its failure to grasp ‘the interconnections within the movement’ of social history, social *reality*. It is a critique of the discourse of political economy focused upon its lack of understanding, and consequently its mistaken construal, of social relations. From a discourse analytical perspective, Marx’s critique of political economy is a critique of the connectivity in its texts: semantic relationships between words, argumentative relationships between propositions, temporal relationships between processes, syntactic relationships between and within sentences, relationships between what is asserted and what is presupposed, etc. What it points to is a critical analysis of the whole formal and conceptual architecture and texture of political economy texts, focusing on texts as relational work (Fairclough 2000), texts as producing certain relations and not producing others, as foregrounding selected elements of those relations, as well as their being produced from *within* certain relations and not from within others.

Capital

Marx’s critique of the political economists is a critique of their failure to go beyond appearances in their representation of capitalism and to challenge their own presuppositions. The same line of critique is evident in what is generally seen as Marx’s most mature and complete work, *Capital* (1976, 1978, 1981). We comment in

particular on the famous analysis in Chapter 1 of the first volume of the ‘fetishism of commodities’³⁵.

Marx points to the ‘enigmatical character of the product of labour’ when it ‘assumes the form of commodities’:

The equality of all sorts of human labour is expressed objectively by their products being all equally values; the measure of the expenditure of labour power by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of the quantity of value of the products of labour; and finally, the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labour affirms itself, takes the form of a social relation between the products. (***)

In the commodity, ‘the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour ... a definite social relation between men .. assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things’ (***) . Things and their values appear in the place of real social relations, they become the appearance of social relations. This is ‘the fetishism of commodities’, which has its origins in ‘the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them’, i.e. as alienated labour; as labour alienated from its own products (***) . To producers, ‘the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations ... but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things’ (****).

The determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time is therefore a secret, hidden under the apparent fluctuations in the relative values of commodities. ... It requires a fully developed production of commodities before, from accumulated experience alone, the scientific conviction springs up, that all the different kinds of private labour ... are continually being reduced to the quantitative proportions in which society requires them

That is, the incommensurable qualities of individuals’ lives are rendered commensurable by money, which is also commensurable with all other things.

The categories of bourgeois economy ... are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production viz the production of commodities. ... Political economy has analysed,

however incompletely, value and its magnitude, and has discovered what lies beneath these forms. But it has never once asked the question why labour is represented by the value of its product and labour-time by the magnitude of that value. These formulae, which bear it stamped upon them in unmistakable letters that they belong to a state of society, in which the process of production has the mastery over man ... appear to the bourgeois intellect to be as much a self-evident necessity imposed by Nature as productive labour itself.

Marx does not explicitly refer to language here, but he notes elsewhere the similarity between language and values. Value is not objective, nor is it inherent in things; rather, it is an abstract concept that ‘transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyph’ (Marx, 1976, p. 167). Value and language share a generative source, productive human activity: ‘the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men’s social product as is their language’ (1976, p. 167). We can treat this extract as a critique of discourse, both the discourse of everyday life and the discourse of the political economists. With respect to the former, the fetishism of commodities is a matter of a particular form of consciousness, how ‘the social character of men’s labour appears to them’, which arises from ‘the peculiar social character’ of their labour. But as the *German Ideology* puts it, consciousness is always ‘burdened’ with ‘matter’ – with language. What is at issue here is in contemporary terms is the discourse of producers and production.

With respect to the political economists, Marx’s critique echoes the critique in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*: the ‘formulae’ (a word he also used in the earlier text) of political economists appear to them as ‘self-evident’, they do not ask ‘why’, they do not delve into the underlying relations to reveal the ‘secret’ of the determination of the magnitude of value by labour-time – nor could they, for that requires a ‘fully developed production of commodities’, the ‘formulae’ of the political economists belong to the ‘state of society’ in which they lived (***). Both the fetishistic discourse of producers and the ‘formulae’ of the political economists are flawed in failing to grasp underlying relations – and again therefore open to critique of what we referred to above as the ‘connectivity’ of texts (and in texts). Thus the critique of discourse remains an important part of Marx’s method in *Capital*, even

though explicit engagement with and critique of the texts of the political economists is more muted.

Critique of the Gotha Programme

A similar conclusion for CDA can be drawn from another of Marx's mature works, the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* of 1875, the last of Marx's major political critiques, which is a critique of a draft programme of the German Socialist Party. We shall focus on the following extract, in which Marx discusses a section of the programme which claims that 'the proceeds of labour' belong 'with equal right' to all members of society. He is discussing 'with equal right', which he refers to as 'ideological nonsense', with respect to a future socialist society:

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society; which is thus in every respect, economically, morally, and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges. Accordingly, the individual producer receives back from society -- after the deductions have been made -- exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labor ... the same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity equivalents: a given amount of labor in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labor in another form.

Hence, *equal right* here is still in principle -- *bourgeois right* ... while the exchange of equivalents in commodity exchange exists only on the average and not in the individual case ... this equal right is still constantly stigmatized by a bourgeois limitation. The right of the producers is *proportional* to the labor they supply; the equality consists in the fact that measurement is made with an *equal standard*, labor.

But one man is superior to another physically, or mentally, and supplies more labor in the same time, or can labor for a longer time; and labor, to serve as a measure, must be defined by its duration or intensity, otherwise it ceases to be a standard of measurement. This *equal* right is an unequal right for unequal labor ... it tacitly recognizes unequal individual endowment, and thus productive capacity, as a natural privilege. It is, therefore, a right of inequality, in its content, like every right. Right, by its very nature, can consist only in the application of an equal standard; but

unequal individuals (and they would not be different individuals if they were not unequal) are measurable only by an equal standard insofar as they are brought under an equal point of view, are taken from one definite side only -- for instance, in the present case, are regarded *only as workers* and nothing more is seen in them, everything else being ignored. ... To avoid all these defects, right, instead of being equal, would have to be unequal.

Marx is arguing that 'equal rights' is the application of an 'equal standard' of measurement, no different from money, which reduces people to mere 'workers', to abstract labour, ignoring other characteristics of people which affect the work they are capable of doing (hence, 'from each according to their ability; to each according to their needs'). The result must be to produce inequality under the 'bourgeois', 'ideological', guise of 'equality' of 'rights'. The mistake is falsely rendering the incommensurable commensurable by standardised measurements. The (intertextual) critique of the appearance of this bourgeois discourse in a socialist programme, and of the exclusion from it of 'the realist outlook' which had already 'taken root' in the Party, again centres upon a failure to grasp underlying relationships – between 'rights', 'standards', and a reductive equalisation of people to nothing but abstract labour. Again, from the perspective of CDA, it is a critique of the conceptual architecture and textual connectivity of the discourse. Here we have Marx in a mature text engaging in the sort of close textual critique which we saw in the early *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, with fundamentally the same target.

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte is in contrast to the other texts we have discussed an analysis of actual historical events – the process leading to Louis Bonaparte's *coup d'etat* in France in 1851 – which includes Marx's analysis of how language figured in this socio-political process. We shall begin with the celebrated opening passage:

Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce ...

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never existed. ... they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. Thus Luther donned the mask of the Apostle Paul, the revolution of 1789 to 1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman republic and the Roman empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793 to 1795.

And later in the text:

One sees: all 'idees napoleoniennes' are ideas of the undeveloped small holding in the freshness of its youth; for the small holding that has outlived its day they are an absurdity. They are only the hallucinations of its death struggle, words that are transformed into phrases, spirits transformed into ghosts... the parody of the empire

Revolutions are made in 'borrowed language' – 'language' in a metaphorical sense, but including language in a literal sense. Marx is talking, in Bakhtinian terms, about heteroglossia, the heteroglossic or intertextual resources that are drawn from the past in the enactment of the present (cf. Fairclough, 1992, ***; Lemke, 1995 ***). But once the 'sober reality' and real 'content' of the revolution emerge, the borrowed 'phrases' disappear, and new discourses emerge. Thus the French Revolutionaries of 1789 'performed the task of their time in Roman costume and with Roman phrases, the task of unchaining and setting up a modern bourgeois society', a 'self-deception' in order to 'conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles'. But 'the new social formation once established, the antediluvian Colossi disappeared and with them the resurrected Romanity ... Wholly absorbed in the production of wealth and peaceful competitive struggle, it no longer comprehended that ghosts from the days of Rome had watched over its cradle'.³⁶

Marx contrasts these ‘earlier revolutions’ – where the ‘phrase’ (an empty shibboleth) conceals the ‘content’ (the meaning, the world historical consequences) – with the ‘social revolution’ struggled for by the communists, which must ‘arrive at’ its ‘content’ without ‘superstition with regard to the past’. This is summed up in the powerful *chiasmus* at the end of this extract:

The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition with regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. There the phrase went beyond the content; here the content goes beyond the phrase. (our italics, ***)

The contrast between ‘phrase’ and ‘content’, ‘phrase’ and ‘reality’, recurs throughout the text. The German word ‘Phrase’ is most often used by Marx in a pejorative way, as we can see later in the text:

And as in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves, from their reality. (***)

But the relationship between ‘phrase’ and ‘content’ can be more complex. In the revolution of 1848, ‘the social republic appeared as a phrase, a prophecy’. It ‘indicated the general content of the modern revolution’ (i.e. the socialist revolution), but it was a content which could not be realised then, because it ‘was in most singular contradiction to everything that, with the material available, with the degree of education attained by the masses, under the given circumstances and relations, could be immediately realised in practice. ... In no period to we find a more confused mixture of high-flown phrases and actual uncertainty and clumsiness ...’. Nevertheless the content of ‘social republic’

haunts the subsequent acts of the drama like a ghost. The *democratic republic* announces its arrival. On June 13 1849, it is dissipated together with its *petty bourgeois* ... The *parliamentary republic*, together with the bourgeoisie, takes

possession of the entire stage; it enjoys its existence to the full, but December 2 1851 buries it to the accompaniment of the anguished cry of the royalists in coalition: “Long live the Republic!” ... The overthrow of the parliamentary republic ... was “*the victory of Bonaparte over parliament, of the executive power over the legislative power, of force without phrases over the force of phrases*”.

The phrase ‘social republic’ was ‘prophetic’ in ‘indicating’ (pointing towards) real social revolution. It ‘haunts the subsequent acts of the drama’, however, like ‘a ghost’, an insubstantial phrase at odds with the content, being (in contemporary CDA terms) successively recontextualized (appropriated but simultaneously transformed) in ‘democratic republic’ and ‘parliamentary republic’, but its ‘force’ as a phrase at odds with content was no match for the ‘force without phrases’ of Bonaparte.

‘This Bonaparte, who constitutes himself chief of the lumpenproletariat .. is the real Bonaparte, the Bonaparte sans phrase’ (***). Here we find Marx describing the politics of cynical corporatist populism, the precursor of twentieth century fascism (Hobsbawm, 1967, ***; Saul, 1992, ***, 1997, ***). Bonaparte saw through the ‘borrowed language’: ‘An old crafty rouse, he conceives the historical life of the nations and their performances of state as comedy in the most vulgar sense, as a masquerade where the grand costumes, words and postures merely serve to make the pettiest knavery’ (***). Bonaparte sees the “performance”, the mythical farce, of bourgeois politics and takes the opportunity to manipulate it. Yet after his ‘victory’, he himself falls victim to his own phrases, the elements of his own “ideology”:

he become(s) the victim of his own conception of the world, the serious buffoon who no longer takes world history for a comedy but his comedy for world history. ... with official phrases about order, religion, family and property in public, before the citizens, and with ... the society of disorder, prostitution and theft, behind him ...

The real content of a phrase may be ‘revealed’ through experience:

The defeat of the June insurgents ... had shown that in Europe the questions at issue are other than that of ‘republic or monarchy’. It had revealed that here *bourgeois republic* signifies the unlimited despotism of one class over other classes. It had proved that ...*the republic signifies in general only the political form of revolution of bourgeois society and not its conservative form of life* (104).

Forms of consciousness and ‘phrases’ are positioned and positioning – the force of their utterance depends upon positions in social relations, in the social hierarchy, both for their social validity, and for their (often constitutive) perspective on the constitution of society:

But the democrat, because he represents the petty bourgeoisie, that is, *a transition class*, in which the interests of two classes are simultaneously mutually blunted, imagines himself situated above class antagonism generally ... they, along with all the rest of the nation, form *the people*. What they represent is *the people’s rights*; what interests them is *the people’s interests*. Accordingly, when a struggle is impending ... they merely have to give the signal and *the people* ... will fall upon *the oppressors* (****)

This is one of a number of instances of free indirect speech in the text – Marx is parodying ‘the democrat’ – the italicised phrases (apart from ‘a transition class’) are ‘the democrat’s’ phrases, phrases which constitute an ‘imaginary’ consciousness arising from a ‘transitional’ historical position in class relations.

The relationship between ‘phrase’ and ‘content’ can be more nuanced than we have suggested so far. Marx contrasts the ‘awakening of the dead’ in the 1789 and 1848 revolutions: “Thus the awakening of the dead in those revolutions” – he means the 1789 revolution, as well as the English revolution - ‘served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parodying the old; of magnifying the given task in imagination, not fleeing from its solution in reality; of finding once more the spirit of revolution, not making its ghost walk about again’. Each of these antithetical clauses sets 1789 against 1848, and the contrast is made explicit: ‘From 1848 to 1851 only the ghost of the old revolution walked about’. So ‘borrowed phrases’ can serve constructive and essential purposes in revolutionary struggles even while ‘concealing the bourgeois limitations of their content’ – or they can merely summon up ‘ghosts’.

What is of value here for CDA, especially in the context of a critique of the language of the new capitalism? Marx shows how revolutions (and counter-revolutions) ‘borrow’ their ‘language’ from the past – in the terms of CDA, it is a recognition of social heteroglossia, of intertextuality, of how change involves the selective recontextualisation and interdiscursive appropriation of existing (past)

discourses, and of this as a process which is socially positioned, relative to different social positionings. There is an ambivalence about this process: while it conceals the ‘content’ beneath the ‘phrase’, Marx suggests that it may either be a positive and necessary recourse for ‘finding once more the spirit of revolution’, or conversely a mere ‘parody’, a ‘ghost’. Derrida (1994) questions Marx’s confident claim that social revolutions are/will be different: Marx points to the way in which the phrases of the past continue to ‘haunt’ the present, as the phrases of Marxism ‘haunt’ us today – can we really expect an end to this?

The economic transformations of today – which appear to have the character of a counter-revolution against welfare state capitalism – certainly do not borrow the heroic language of ‘Romanity’, but they do nevertheless conceal their ‘content’ in ‘phrases’ from ‘borrowed languages’, especially that of the “golden age” of capitalism, much of which is, in turn, ‘borrowed’ from scholastic dogma and mercantilist rhetoric (Graham, in press).³⁷ For instance, the language of ‘individual freedom’ which is applied not only to the ‘freedom’ of people as ‘consumers’ ‘to choose’ from the unprecedented range of ‘choice’, the provision of which capital not infrequently represents as its *raison d’etre*, but also for instance with more obvious cynicism to the ‘freedom’ which people gain from a market which is increasingly demanding part-time and short-term workers. Of course critiques of such ideological language are common in CDA, but what Marx valuably emphasizes is that the ideological ‘force’ of such ‘phrases’ comes from their potency in historical consciousness in memory – it was the power of the memory of the first French revolution and the first Napoleon which gave the ‘phrases’ of the second their force.

Marx and CDA

What can CDA learn from Marx’s critique of discourse? Some aspects of Marx’s critique are already familiar within CDA – for instance, his ‘transformational criticism’ of texts of Hegel in which the focus is Hegel’s idealist attribution of agency to ‘the idea’:

‘The idea is made the subject and the actual relation of family and civil society to the state is conceived as its internal imaginary activity. Family and civil society are the

premises of the state; they are the genuinely active elements, but in speculative philosophy things are inverted' (Marx, 1843/1975, p. ***).

The critique of texts in terms of their representations of agency is a central concern of 'critical linguistics' and CDA. Also, Marx's view of language as just one element in the productive activity of social life, always dialectically interconnected with others as an ever-present moment and aspect of the production [meant here in the broadest possible sense to include all human activity] and reproduction of social forms (consciousness, physical activity, institutionalised forms) has certainly received some (if so far insufficient) development within CDA (eg Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; Graham 1999). So too the recognition that different discourses are tied to different positions within given systems of social relations – though Marx's stress on the development of discourses as conditional upon stages of development of systems of social relations and production adds a crucial historical dimension to the positionality of discourses.

In the commentary on selected texts above, however, we have focused on what we have referred to as the 'connectivity' in texts; relations, contradictions, and tensions between elements. We see the critique of texts in these terms as firstly tied to materialist view of texts as a modality of social production, but secondly dependent upon methods of analysing texts which are so far underdeveloped (Fairclough 2000). Hitherto, text analysis in CDA as elsewhere has been limited by theories of language which focus on the sentence, and tend to see texts in terms of extensions of the grammar of the sentence. We need ways of seeing and analysing texts as processes, as work, as 'working up' specific relations between elements to the exclusion of other possible relations – semantic, conceptual and classificatory relationships between words, logical relationships between propositions, temporal relationships between processes, syntactic relationships between and within sentences, relationships between what is asserted and what is presupposed, and so forth. This 'work' of texts is closely integrated within the productive activities of social life (Halliday, 1993, p. 8), it dialectally internalises other facets of these productive activities and is dialectically internalised within them, while nevertheless remaining a distinctively discursive process which needs to be grasped in terms of its own logic, as well as its connection

with others. Marx does not of course say any of this (perhaps because he doesn't see discourse/text/language as separate from the rest of human existence), but his critical method includes a sophisticated, developmental critique of discourse that *calls* for it.

Developing CDA in this direction is not a purely 'academic' challenge. A widely noted feature of contemporary social life is its 'fragmentation', and a widely noted obstacle to formulating alternatives to the new capitalism is its opacity as system which goes with and is sustained by that fragmentation. This opacity is not lessened merely by awareness of its existence. There is surely truth still in Marx's insight that it takes a certain level of development of the new system of social, a certain accumulation of experience, to be able to see the relations which underlie its appearances and to go beyond these. From this point of view, if CDA is to engage in the critique of language in the new capitalism, we need to be in tune with the most developed work in contemporary political economy and other political and social sciences. Nevertheless, unlike in Marx's time, the visibility of the system to those who live within it, suffer from it, and would wish to change it, is conditioned by elaborate networks of mediation.

The task is not only a critique of our own 'bourgeois economists', but also a critique of our government agencies, our armies of 'experts' (including academics), our 'news', our "entertainment", our corporations, and so forth. But connectivity and the relational logic thereof is a focal concern throughout. Just to take one banal example: the defence of the spokesperson for a company accused on one of the many 'consumer affairs' slots within the media of producing foods for children which damage their health: 'Our concern is to ensure that parents have a wide choice'. 'Choice' appears pervasively as what Marx might have called an 'empty phrase' whose emptiness comes from its confinement to 'appearances', its abstract and equivocal nature, the historical baggage it carries, and crucially the failure of indeed many contemporary discourses to register underlying relationships which connect 'choice' to relations of production, extortion, and monopoly, rather than just fragmented (and frenzied) consumption.

Marx as discourse analyst

On one level it is simply anachronistic to suggest that Marx was a discourse analyst. Discourse analysis did not exist in his time. On another level however it is a claim that has some substance: Marx's view of language and mode of language critique are similar to those of some contemporary critical discourse analysts.

Let us finally try to justify this claim about his view of language by referring to a section of the *Grundrisse*, from the Chapter on Money (142 ff in Penguin edition):

Every moment, in calculating, accounting etc., that we transform commodities into value symbols, we fix them as mere exchange values, making abstraction from the matter they are composed of and all their natural qualities. On paper, in the head, this metamorphosis proceeds by mere abstraction; but in the real exchange process a real mediation is required, a means to accomplish this abstraction. ... In the crudest barter, when two commodities are exchanged for one another, each is first equated with a symbol which expresses their exchange value, e.g. among certain Negroes on the West African coast, = x bars. One commodity is = 1 bar; the other = 2 bars. They are exchanged in this relation. The commodities are first transformed into bars in the head and in speech before they are exchanged for one another. They are appraised before being exchanged, and in order to appraise them they must be brought into a given numerical relation to one another ... In order to determine what amount of bread I need in order to exchange it for a yard of linen, I first equate the yard of linen with its exchange value, i.e. = $1/x$ hours of labour time. Similarly, I equate the pound of bread with its exchange value, = $1/x$ or $2/x$ hours of labour time. I equate each of the commodities with a third; i.e. not with themselves. This third, which differs from them both, exists initially only in the head, as a conception, since it expresses a relation; just as, in general, relations can be established as existing only by being *thought*, as distinct from the subjects which are in these relations with each other. For the purpose of merely making a comparison – an appraisal of products – of determining their value ideally, it suffices to make this transformation in the head (a transformation in which the product exists merely as the expression of quantitative relations of production). This abstraction will do for comparing commodities; but in actual exchange this abstraction in turn must be objectified, must be symbolized, realized in a symbol. ... (Such a symbol presupposes general recognition; it can only be a social symbol; it expresses, indeed, nothing more than a social relation.) ... The process, then, is simply this: The product becomes a commodity, *i.e. a mere moment*

of exchange. The commodity is transformed into exchange value. In order to equate it with itself as an exchange value, it is exchanged for a symbol which represents it as exchange value as such. As such a symbolized exchange value, it can then in turn be exchanged in definite relations for every other commodity. Because the product becomes a commodity, and the commodity becomes an exchange value, it obtains, at first only in the head, a double existence. This doubling in the idea proceeds (and must proceed) to the point where the commodity appears double in real exchange: as a natural product on one side, as exchange value on the other. I.e. the commodity's exchange value obtains a material existence separate from the commodity.

(The material in which this symbol is expressed is by no means a matter of indifference, even though it manifests itself in many different historical forms. In the development of society, not only the symbol but likewise the material corresponding to the symbol are worked out -- a material from which society later tries to disentangle itself; if a symbol is not to be arbitrary, certain conditions are demanded of the material in which it is represented. The symbols for words, for example the alphabet etc., have an analogous history.)

There is a dialectical view of discourse as one element of social life in this extract. Money 'expresses a relation', relations 'can be established as existing only by being thought', but the relation of value is only 'established' by thought when people begin to engage in exchange (eg barter). While the value relation continues to work as an 'abstraction', a relation established 'in the head and in speech' and 'on paper', in the appraisal of products, for the actual exchange of commodities the 'abstraction' must be 'objectified', 'symbolized, realized in a symbol' – 'exchange value obtains a material existence separate from the commodity'. This is a constitutive view of discourse: discourse shapes the development of 'real exchange' as the value relation, a relation in thought/speech – a discourse – becomes 'objectified'. It is not however an idealist view of discourse, but a dialectical one: 'real exchange' shapes the development of discourse - it is only at a certain stage in the development of 'real exchange' that the value relation is 'established in thought' – which shapes the development of 'real exchange'. The constitutive work of discourse is not viewed idealistically as ideas being realized in material reality: the value relation as an 'abstraction' is already material - language is the 'matter' which the mind is 'burdened

with', as the German Ideology put it – and the 'abstraction' is 'objectified' as a 'symbol', itself a synthesis of idea and matter. Moreover, there is a non-arbitrary relationship between money as a symbol and 'the material in which this symbol is expressed' – it has to be 'divisible at will', for instance.

Conclusion

We claim that Marx was a discourse theorist *avant la lettre* because he had a discourse view of language as one element of social life which is dialectically interconnected with others, and an element which is thoroughly present in the dialectical movement between consciousness, 'real exchange', and material (in the sense of physical) existence overall. Marx was also a discourse analyst *avant la lettre* because he put this dialectical view of discourse to work in his economic, political and historical analyses. Perhaps in one sense he was a better discourse analyst than many of us are now: although his work does not obviously stand up well to contemporary expectations (in linguistics journal articles, for instance) of a sustained and systematic focus on language, nor does it suffer from the reifying and idealizing consequences of abstracting language from the social process, if only to connect it back to the social process in analysis.

But perhaps the clearest message that Marx has left us as discourse analysts is that we must analyse the relationships that characterise this period as unique, the relationships that *define* it as such: Are we even living in capitalist societies; or, have the relationships that characterise this period changed so drastically from those of the recent past as to make the new global system definable as "something else", as a "new" economy, a "post" capitalist society? What are the implications of global organisations, both of the entrepreneurial (i.e. transnational corporations) and governmental (WTO, IMF, ILO, OECD, EU, etc) kind? What are *their* relationships? What are the consequences of predominating global "shareholder" capitalism, "social capital" in Marx's words? What does the waning of national power mean for people from different walks of life? What does it mean for democracy? How do new media change the kinds of relationships and representations that we can and do have? *How* do we interact to do what we do (productive activity), and how does this define our

social roles and institutions? *What do we value and how?* These are merely some of the questions left to us by Marx. These are the challenges for CDA.

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¹ That said, there are clearly elements of, for instance, *The German Ideology*, where Marx is clearly concerned with showing the role of ‘metadiscursive regulation’ imposed by classical political economy and political theory in the name of vested interests supporting the Natural Order (see below, *Ideology*).

² While much is made of Feurbach’s materialist influence on Marx, we concur with Colletti (1975, p. 24) that to overstate the case is ‘naïve’. Marx was an avowed Aristotelean, and as such thoroughly familiar with Aristotle’s thought, as well as that of the ancient Greeks in general (Fenves, 1986, p. 433). Feurbach’s move, while clearly approved of by Marx, was merely another variation on ‘one of the most profound and ancient themes in philosophical history, and recurs constantly in the debate between Idealism and Materialism’ (Colletti, 1975, p. 24). We can assume that Marx was quite aware of all this, well before Feurbach formulated his abstract materialist theses against neo-Hegelianism (cf. Fenves, 1986).

³ Aristotle used the terms “*aphairesis*” and “*korismos*” which he used in different ways to describe the process of concept formation by abstracting form from matter (Weinberg, p. 1). The term ‘abstraction’ is again a contribution of the scholastics.

⁴ The primary concern of both Plato and Aristotle was to explain how it was that people were able to consider, in universal terms, the properties of an object – a brass ring for instance – and consider “circularity” as a universal property without taking into account any other sensuous aspects of the matter. For Aristotle, abstraction is the method by which people come to know Universal characteristics of categories, such as the mathematical characteristics of ‘circle’ or ‘triangle’ (Weinberg, 1968, p. 2). Abstraction rests on the assumption that the abstracted forms [formal] elements of matter, *as such*, exist only in the mind, and that these are the ‘fundamental elements of thought which are the referents of the verbal elements of spoken discourse’ (p. 2).

⁵ Even though Kant’s debt to the scholastic doctrine is negative in this respect.

⁶ Those more familiar with Aristotle might well argue that his concept of abstraction was not static in the first place, and that the scholastic influence has more to do with this. While the point is clearly arguable, here is not the place to take that argument up. We can note, though, that as well as treating ‘substance’ or ‘essence’ in terms of abstraction, Aristotle also treats *causes* in the same way (1998, pp. 440-452), although this remains an undeveloped aspect of *The Metaphysics*. “OK. OK. Enough examples of what happens on this theory. Many more could be marshalled, but enough. The endless, endless difficulties about production, the total non-obtaining of any mode of schematizing, which afflict Form numbers are surely plausibly construed as a sign. They are a sign that [abstractions] DO NOT EXIST IN SEPARATION FROM PERCEPTIBLE OBJECTS (as widely advertised) and that PRINCIPLES OF THIS KIND GIBT ES NICHT” (Aristotle, 1998, p. 452).

⁷ We note with a sense of irony that such a view is now widely adopted by techno-fetishists throughout the developed world. Its expression can be seen in such terms as “knowledge economy” and “perfect information” (cf. Graham 2000).

⁸ We note here that abstraction is not necessarily a perjorative term, either in Marx or anywhere else. For Marx, it is how we predispose ourselves to our own abstractions (e.g. our attitudes to religion) that make them more or less damaging.

⁹ Readers familiar with Bourdieu (e.g. 1990, 1991, 1998) will be familiar with the concept, if not its foundation.

¹⁰ There is absolutely no foundation whatsoever for suggesting that Marx held a conception of class as a static immutable “substance” that properly belongs to a particular group of people. According to Marx, even at its most well-developed, ‘class articulation does not emerge in pure form ... From this point of view ... doctors and government officials would also form two classes, as they belong to two distinct social groups ... The same would hold true for the *infinite fragmentation of interests and positions* into which the division of social labour splits (Marx, 1981, p. 1025-1026, emphasis added). Class, like capital, is not a “thing”; it is the dynamic result of things people *do*.

¹¹ Entia have four aspects –as Accident, as Truth of Falsehood, as Potential or Actual, or as Categorically defined subject matters – but are ‘not species under a common genus’, neither are they in ‘co-ordinate’ [paratactic/co-meronymous] or ‘subordinate’ [hypotactic/co-hyponymous] relationships (Grote, 1872, p. 86). They merely have ‘a relationship with a common term’ [the *fundamentum* or ‘First Essence’ or Subject] but ‘no other necessary relation with each other’ (p. 86). For the dialectic, however, it is the last of these aspects of Entia that concern us, that which is defined under the ten Categories outlined by Aristotle, to be outlined presently, and in which Aristotle ‘appears to blend Logic and Ontology into one’ (p. 88).

¹² Aristotle's ten categories were reduced, via a multitude of historical interpretations, to 'four principle Categories – Substance, Quantity, Quality, and Relation', yet '[e]ven these four cannot be kept clearly apart: the predicates which declare Quantity or Quality at the same time declare Relation; while the predicates of Relation must also imply the fundamentum either of Quantity or of Quality' (Grote, 1872, p. 129).

¹³ In CDA, such a group is called a 'discourse community' (cf. Fairclough, ***; Graham and McKenna, 2000; Lemke, 1995, ***).

¹⁴ Those familiar with critical theory will recognise contemporary notions and definitions of "ideology" and "hegemony" in the definitions of Endoxa.

¹⁵ Dialectic does not proceed from first principles. Rather, its purpose is to 'open a new road to the first *principia* of each separate science' (p. 391). In any case, the first *principia* of a science 'can never be scrutinized through the truths of the science itself, which *presuppose them and are deduced from them*' (p. 391, our emphasis).

¹⁶ Propositions and problems fall under four Heads, or categories, which are types of predicates that belong to the subject matter (*Ens* or *Entia*): *Genus* and *Differentia*; and *Proprium* or *Accident* (Grote, 1872, p. 398). Aristotle defines 'four sorts of matters (*Entia*)' which are distinguished 'in reference to their functions as constituent members of propositions' (p. 83): that which is part of the subject matter [essential predicate]; that which is 'affirmable of a Subject' but is not actually part of the subject matter [non-essential predicate]; that which is 'both in a Subject and affirmable of a Subject' [essence]; and that which is neither part of a subject nor affirmable of it [accident] (p. 83). *Ens* 'is not a synonymous or univocal word' (p. 84), it is, rather, '*multivocal* ... having many meanings held together by multifarious and graduated relationship to one common *fundamentum*' (pp. 84-85).

¹⁷ The specific type of essence or *Ens* with which Aristotle's dialectic is concerned is the form in which *Ens* is defined most completely: '*Ens*, in its complete state—concrete, individual, determinate—includes an embodiment of all these ten Categories; the First *Ens* being the Subject of which the rest are Predicates' (Grote, 1872, p. 93). Anything which may be said about a subject, according to Aristotle, must fall 'under one or more of these ten general heads; while the full outfit of the individual will comprise some predicate under each of them' (p. 93). These categories – which Aristotle suggests are exhaustive – are 1) Essence or Substance; 2) How Much; 3) What Manner or Quality; 4) *Ad Aliquid* - in relation to something [*Relatum* and *Correlatum*]; 5) Where; 6) When; 7) In what posture (How); 8) To have (attributes); 9) Activity (what is the subject doing); 10) Passivity (what is being done to the subject) (p. 93). Each of these categories has 'more or fewer species contained under it, but not being itself contained under any larger genus (*Ens* not being a genus)' (p. 94).

¹⁸ The difference between what is *in*, or part of a subject, and what is *predicated of* (i.e. logically follows from, or naturally associated with) the subject depends entirely on the actual relationships between a "subject" and its "predicates", and, in a formal sense, this turns on the *grammatical status of the predicate* (Grote, 1872, p. 91). Such sensitivity to linguistic, grammatical, and discursive subtlety ought not be overlooked in Marx's most favoured classical scholar (Fenves, 1986, p. 433), especially when Marx makes much of how humanity tends to objectify its linguistic abstractions and place particular of them "in charge" of society (e.g. God, the Church, Money, The Market, "Globalisation", Technology, etc). The linguistic tendency towards "thinginess" is, as Adorno (1973, p. 56) and Halliday (1993, p. 11) quite rightly point out, a function and tendency of language-in-use. As such, it goes directly to the foundations of dialectic method.

¹⁹ Thomas Jefferson translated De Tracy's *Elemens de Ideologie* into English in 1816.

²⁰ Kennedy points out that Marx considered Tracy, because of his 'labour theory of value' and his theory of the "concoors de forces", 'to a certain point a light among the vulgar economists' (in Kennedy, 1979, p. 376). However, Kennedy ignores Marx's scathing comments directed towards Tracy in Vol 2 of capital (1978, p. ***).

²¹ Kennedy is concerned to emphasise that Tracy was a materialist. Even though his *Ideology* contained 'a strain of idealism', this was 'virtually nullified' by Tracy's fundamental conception of ideology as part of 'zoology'. It is also nullified for Kennedy by the fact that Tracy set himself in opposition to the idealisms of Malebranche and Berkeley (1979, p. 364).

²² These are Latin terms developed by the scholastics, although their pedigree is clearly Aristotlean (Lawson-Tancred, 1998, pp. xxx-xxxi).

²³ Today, the use of authoritative quotations as the basis of arguments is conventional. In Marx's day, argument from authority was considered to be the weakest form of argumentation. His manner of using quotes in *Capital*, we think, indicates that by the time Marx wrote *Capital*, he felt he had argued out a sufficiently developed and entirely new approach to political economy by means of his earlier dialectical "counter syllogising". It is such an unusual method of using quotes that in the preface to the third edition of *Capital*, Engels feels the need to explain 'Marx's manner of quoting, which is so little understood' (in Marx, 1976, p. 108).

²⁴ Aristotle details four 'helps' for proceeding with dialectical engagement. The dialectician *must*: i) 'have a large collection of propositions' on the subject; ii) 'study and discriminate the different senses in which the Terms of these proposition are used'; iii) 'detect and note Differences'; and iv) 'investigate Resemblances' (Grote, 1872, p. 401). On the first point, propositions may be collected 'out of written treatises as well as from personal enquiry'. If the proposition is 'currently admitted as true in general or in most cases, it must be tendered ... as a universal principle' (p. 401). In fact, '[a]ll propositions must be registered in the most general terms possible, and must then be resolved into their subordinate constitute particulars, as far as the process of subdivision can be carried' (p. 402). On the second protocol, terms must be investigated for 'Equivocation' because, often, they have different, double, or multiple meanings in common usage; their usage and therefore their predicates may differ vastly (p. 402). On the third and fourth protocols, terms must be studied for Differences and Resemblances because terms that seem closely allied may, because of their usage or equivocation, have vastly different meanings. Conversely, 'subjects of great apparent difference' may bear resemblance for precisely the same reason: context of usage; if the different meanings of terms are not known, then dialecticians 'cannot know clearly' what they are saying (p. 406). The third and fourth 'helps', the investigation of Differences [*Differentia*] and Resemblances amongst predicates, are useful for ascertaining, in the case of Differences, 'the essence or definition of any thing; for we ascertain this by exclusion of what is foreign thereunto, founded on the appropriate differences in each case' (p. 407). From Resemblances, we can inductively derive counter-syllogisms: from the 'repetition of similar particulars a universal is obtained', and we are 'entitled to assume as an Endoxon or doctrine conformable to common opinion, that what happens to any one' element in a string of similar cases 'will also happen to the rest'. On these bases, we can develop the major proposition of a counter-syllogism, an assertion that contradicts the endoxic thesis.

²⁵ It might well be argued that "family" etc are abstractions, and rightly so. But Marx explicates his materialist formulation shortly thereafter: '... men [*sic*], who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relationship between man and woman, parents and children. The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one ..., and must then be treated and analysed according to the existing empirical data, not according to "the concept of the family," as is the custom in Germany' (Marx, 1846/1972, pp. 120-121).

²⁶ This point is made most clearly in *The German Ideology* (1846/1972), wherein Marx identifies 'the language of real life' as 'the material activity and the material intercourse of men' (1846/1972, p. 118).

²⁷ Grote calls this method a form of 'Socratic brachiology' because of the branching, relational complexity that such an approach entails.

²⁸ "Organic", we propose, is best understood here as "instrumental and essential constituents", in this case, of "the state, the political constitution". That is why Marx says that, in Hegel, the 'organic is the *Idea of the the differences* and their ideal determination', but that 'their reality is organic': the relationships that constitute the state – family, civil sentiment, social institutions, political sentiment, political institutions, etc – are the state's essential elements; they are functionally, antagonistically, and instrumentally related to the state and are inseparable from it; they both define and create the state, and are thus its organic constituents.

²⁹ Throughout the whole of his work, Marx's method is marked by a "working out" process in his texts. For instance, 'when Marx wrote the *Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State* he had not yet arrived at theoretical communism. He arrived at this goal *in the course of writing it*' (Colletti, 1975, p. 45).

³⁰ Note here the sensitivity to nominalisation and its implications which "goes without saying": the person who accepts "intuition", a nominalised thing, has already presupposed an abstraction from real activity, intuiting.

³¹ In introducing *Excerpts*, Colletti (1975, p. 259) notes that 84 quotes have been edited from the original manuscript. Thirteen remain in the text.

³² “Accidental” here is meant in the formal Aristotelean sense; i.e. it could belong to other forms of social organisation, but it is construed by Adam Smith et al as deliberately deployed by capitalists to break up the monopolies of mercantilist states (see Smith, 1776, pp. ***).

³³ ‘No land without a master’.

³⁴ It is worth noting what Marx means by “property”: he means the property rights that stem from legal rights in land, to which ‘capital is welded’ (***). “Property ownership” should not be confused with simple possession, a mistake of communists, socialists, conservatives, and liberals of all stripes.

³⁵ Marx’s use of the fetish concept is central in his critique of alienation and can be traced to his earliest work, in particular his critique of religion. In his critique of political economy, the concept is worked up throughout, from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* onwards: ‘It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains within himself. The worker places his life in the object; but now the object no longer belongs to him, but to the object. The greater his activity, therefore, the fewer objects the worker possesses. What the product of his labour is, he is not’ (1844/1975, p. 324).

³⁶ On ‘ghost’, ‘spirit’, etc metaphors in Marx, see Derrida (1994).

³⁷ This is especially so where the discourse of “choice” is concerned. It has its historical content in the State’s urge to dispense with church doctrine against usury. Interestingly, it was Aristotle’s concept of ‘free will’ - today evolved into “rational choice” theory - that was firstly decisive in bringing church prohibitions against usury to the status of a lesser sin (Langholm, 1998, p. 74). The scholastics first shifted the burden of sin, by a dubious twist of one of Aristotle’s comments (‘Forced will is will’), from the person who lent money to the person who *borrowed* it: ‘One who pays usury does so voluntarily in the same sense in which one jettisons cargo when in peril at sea can be said to act voluntarily, namely, in the sense that he prefers to lose his property rather than his life’ (p. 74). Thus, a newly distorted conception of “free will”, and thus of “free” choice, became currency for mainstream economic thought and has remained so ever since. Marx quite rightly savages this particularly perverse discourse of false freedom (e.g. Marx, 1976, p. 280, chapt. 28).