Heuristic Models in Marxian Theory

Loic J. D. Wacquant


Stable URL:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0037-7732%28198509%2964%3A1%3C17%3AHIMT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C

*Social Forces* is currently published by University of North Carolina Press.

________________________________________________________________________

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use, available at http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html. JSTOR’s Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at http://www.jstor.org/journals/uncpress.html.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

________________________________________________________________________

For more information on JSTOR contact jstor-info@umich.edu.

©2003 JSTOR
Heuristic Models in Marxian Theory*

LOÏC J. D. WACQUANT, Center of Nouméa, New Caledonia

Abstract

In building social theory, Marx used not one (as generally regarded) but three heuristic models: base–superstructure, organic totality, and dialectical development. We document their existence, explain their functioning, and display the analytical division of labor they partake in. For each model is designed to operate in a given “analytical zone” which can be characterized by a level of abstraction (from the specific to the general), a focus on structure or on process, and a time-frame. We argue that failure to discern these models and their respective areas of application, overlap, and divergence is at the root of many distortions and misunderstandings that Marxian theory remains subject to.

Marxism is a people of models (…). The genius of Marx, the secret of his enduring power lies in his having been the first to build true social models (Braudel, 80).

Few bodies of thought have received more attention, aroused more controversy, and wielded more influence than that of Marx. Indeed, much of modern sociology has developed and is still developing out of a shadowy dialogue with “the ghost of Marx” (Bottomore and Nisbet; Giddens, b; Zeitlin). But few social theories have been subject to more misinterpretation. Above and beyond the political-ideological overtones of the issues raised by the historic link connecting Marx and the advent of self-proclaimed “Marxist” regimes, the hermeneutics of Marx’s œuvre presents formidable obstacles in and of itself: by its sheer volume, scope, range, and sophistication, it defies straightforward encapsulation. It would be all

*This paper originated in a seminar on “Theories of Evolution” led by Gerhard Lenski, to whom I am especially indebted for his unremitting support and stimulating suggestions concerning many of the issues herein discussed. Its aim is to prompt sociologists to retrieve the theoretical wealth that the Marxian cornucopia still holds, not to found a new “orthodoxy.” I also thank Xaviera Bonamour du Tartre for her editorial and emotional assistance. All translations from the French are mine. Address correspondence to the author, c/o Mr. Cantrel, 20 rue Brunier-Bourbon, CHATOU 78400 France.

© 1985 The University of North Carolina Press
too easy and quite otiose to adduce here a select roster of the hundreds of books purporting to disclose the true reading of the Marxian scriptures, to undertake a subtle bibliographical exegesis showing why they all missed the mark, and then to proceed to uncover the essential gist of Marx's theory. The aim of this paper is much more modest: it is to contribute to a better understanding of why Marxian thought has been and remains so widely distorted and oversimplified,\(^1\) not by focusing on the historical conditions in which it has been incorporated in our social stock of knowledge, but rather by close scrutiny of the various models of analysis employed by Marx in the course of his theoretical endeavors.

That Marx did expound a model (fit or unfit) for sociological analysis seems a matter of agreement among scholars of quite diverse persuasions (Aron, Merton, Sweezy, to mention but three tendencies in social theory). To some, it is precisely this facet of Marx's work that is most valuable. Thus for C. Wright Mills, there is no doubt that "his model is what is great; that is what is alive in Marxism" (38). Lévi-Strauss goes further and asserts that "following Rousseau, and under a decisive shape, Marx has taught that social science is not constructed on the level of events any more than physics is from the data of the senses: the goal is to build a model, to study its properties and the different ways in which it responds" (a,49). But few have entertained the notion that Marx's work contains not one, but several models whose interrelation permits the very variety and richness Marx's analyses assume. Fewer still have consistently advanced the thesis that timing is critical to the whole enterprise. It is these two ideas, that Marx bequeathed us a "model of models" and that temporality is a crucial ingredient in their employment, that we wish to connect and further develop.

Our contention is that the author of Das Kapital combined different frameworks, each of which was designed to overcome the defects of the others and to highlight certain essential properties of human societies. Following Melvin Rader's cogent leads, we identify three models: base-superstructure, dialectical development, and organic totality.\(^2\) Each of them is examined in turn. We document their presence in Marx's writings, we explicate their structure, we chart their scope, and underline their respective foci: for each model embraces particular time-space coordinates to generate a given type of analysis. Hence the problem of their articulation and overlap is crucial and we exercise special care to show in what ways they link up and are compatible with one another. The main thrust of our argument is to exhibit the analytical division of labor these models partake in; it may grosso modo be delineated as follows: (a) the base-superstructure model takes up long-term, large-scale structural phenomena; it is nomothetic and abstract; (b) the organic totality is comparatively more concrete and deals with specific social formations in bounded historic conjunctures; and (c) the dialectical development model is a "catalyst": it sup-
ports the other two and demonstrates the processes of their respective dynamics.

Sorting out levels and modes of analysis may then help us achieve a better comprehension of Marxian theory: what contradictions appear in it may reveal themselves to be essentially tensions provoked by the (sometimes rough) "cohabitation" of distinct models of analysis. This is not to say that we have identified the *causa finalis* of each and every discrepancy reported in Marx's work; the latter is protean, unsystematic, open-ended. However, the consistency of its theoretical structure is reinforced when related to the plurality of analytical models and temporalities that support it. Many of the questions that puzzle students of Marx (e.g., his theory of class, of societal evolution, his conception of causality) may be *clarified* once they are reframed in the light of his simultaneous usage of different models.

**Prefatory Note: On the Notion of "Model"**

A brief prolegomenon is in order here, to clarify what we mean by "model." Definitions abound and dismay awaits anyone who dares to inventory all the species ever identified. A by no means exhaustive taxonomy yields at least the following varieties: mechanical versus statistical (Lévi-Strauss, b), mimetic vs. analogical (Bourdieu et al.), empirical vs. isomorphic (Brown), conceptual vs. cybernetic (witness Parsons' early and late "visions" of society), formal vs. mathematical (Rocher), static vs. dynamic, qualitative vs. quantitative, ideal, paradigmatic, etc. We need not enter this forum; for purposes of our argument, a terse definition will do: a *heuristic model* is a figurative representation of a perceived object used to guide one in pursuit of its knowledge. Its functions are twofold: it provides a notional ensemble, a perspective that permits an ordered perception of the empirical world; it is a directing scheme for theory construction and further investigations. It is not a theory per se, but serves as a launching pad for theoretical ventures (divergent theories may spring from one and the same model; conversely different models can be the underpinnings of like theoretical propositions). Thus it can be neither "true" nor "false," only serviceable and adequate to varying degrees, for its *raison d'être* is cognitive productivity.

This, we hold, characterizes all three of Marx's models. They are, to recall Nisbet's (b) comparison of sociology and art, "abstract portraits" of society. Drawn in bold strokes, they purposely omit certain of its features in order to magnify others; this "creative treason" (Escarpet) they commit is the measure of their worth. Final warning: the portrait is not to be mistaken for the object itself; many misreadings of Marx have their root in the confusion of the models with the reality they *symbolically represent*. To avoid what Whitehead has aptly labelled the "fallacy of misplaced con-
creteness," one must constantly bear in mind the metaphorical nature of the models (for a fuller warning, read Brown,67ff.: ". . . we sociologists have not grasped the thoroughly metaphorical character of theoretic activity").

I. Base–Superstructure: The Fundamentalist and Dialectical Interpretations

The base–superstructure model is the one most readily accessible in Marx's writings. In fact, it has been granted so much attention as to appear as the sole and ultimate key to Marxian theory. We will see later in what sense this is inexact. But we must first explicate the model, determine its strengths and weaknesses, before disproving the claim that it offers the comprehensive statement of the historical materialist method and thesis.

A

The *locus classicus* of the base–superstructure model is undoubtedly the oft-quoted "Preface" to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. There we find the framework of Marx's overview in the most compressed and lucid form it ever assumes in his work. It is worth citing in part.

In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of the material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society—the real foundation on which legal and political superstructures arise and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life (Bottomore and Rubel,51).5

The essential categories of Marxian analysis are: the forces of production, the relations of production, the legal and political institutions, ideology and forms of social consciousness (for proof that the categories are clearcut and can be satisfactorily defined, see Chapter 1 in Shaw—a non-Marxist standpoint—and McMurtry,53,73,101,127–8,146—a Marxist opinion). They in turn combine to form three distinct levels which are superimposed one on top of the other: the material basis (productive forces), the economic structure ("the totality of the relations of production"), the superstructure (legal and political institutions, ideological productions). The first two levels together characterize a given "mode of production." These are the structural components of Marx's conception of society. So far we are unlikely to have ignited great controversy. It is an
altogether different matter when one attempts to delineate the causal links that relate base, structure, and superstructure, and explain historical movement.

The classical reading of the "materialist interpretation of history" is predicated on the architectural metaphor where the base of a building supports its superstructure (Cohen has this variant: the roof/superstructure is supported by the struts/base and renders them more stable—functional explanation). The base in Marx's model can be taken to refer either to the forces of production (technological determinism) or to the mode of production in toto (economic determinism); the superstructure is composed of the remaining political, legal, and cultural institutions (the state, courts, bureaucracies, parties, morals, science, aesthetics, etc.). Because a superstructure rests on its foundations and not vice versa, the implication is that the base determines the superstructure. And indeed, there is strong textual support in Marx for the fundamentalist stance, as the following quotations illustrate:

Are men free to choose for themselves this or that form of society? By no means. Take a definite state of development in the productive forces of men, and you will get a definite form of distribution and consumption. Take a given stage in the development of production, distribution, and consumption, and you will have a given social order, a given organization of the family, of orders or of classes, in a word, a corresponding civil society. Assume a given civil society and you will get given political relations, which are but the official expression of civil society (e,165).

In acquiring new productive forces, men change their mode of production; and in changing their mode of production, the way they earn their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill will give you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the industrial capitalist (e,184).

The social relations of production are altered, transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, of the forces of production. The relations of production in their totality constitute what is called the social relations, society, and moreover, a society at a definite stage of historical development (Bottomore and Rubel,147).

The (economic) relations and consequently the social, moral, and political state of nations change with the change in the material powers of production (Cohen,146).

The fundamentalist characterization of the base-superstructure model reflects "scientific socialism" as expounded by the theoreticians of German social democracy between 1875 and 1914 (McLellan,b). It retained a dominant position in the field of Marxian studies well into the first half of the twentieth century, when Marx's early writings and Die Grundrisse were finally published and circulated. Figure 1 casts this view in summational, schematic form.

The fundamentalist version of the model thus entails three basic
propositions: (1) society consists of separate strata that are externally and hierarchically related; (2) changes in the economic stratum (forces and/or relations of production) of a society effect changes in its social, political, and psychological structure; and (3) the causal determination runs exclusively in one way, upward from base to superstructure: variations in superstructural phenomena are explained in terms of the technoeconomic systems from which they have "arisen."

The most common interpretations of Marx's theory, shared both by avowed Marxists and non-Marxists, are variegated decipherments of this schema. They bear different names: primacy of the forces, economic mono-causality, monist view of history, scientific socialism; but they share in the same three tenets as extracted above. We asseverate now that the base–superstructure model alone yields a distorted, incomplete vision of Marxian sociology. Marx's total position is more accurately reflected when it is coupled with the model of the dialectic. It is the hybrid product of this combination, called the dialectical interpretation of the base–superstructure, to which we now turn.
What exactly is wrong with the fundamentalist thesis? What do we understand by “dialectic?” How, precisely, does the latter impinge on the former? These three questions are now addressed *seriatim*.

The base–superstructure model is found wanting on two counts: first, there is ample evidence in Marx’s writings that it is oversimplified and in many respects misleading; second, it is *not* the one Marx used in his own sociohistorical forays.

In order to examine the connections between spiritual production and material production, it is above all necessary to grasp the latter itself not as a general category but *in definite historical form*. Thus, for example, different kinds of spiritual production correspond to the capitalist mode of production and to the mode of production of the Middle Ages. If material production is not conceived in its *specific historical form*, it is impossible to understand what is specific in the spiritual production corresponding to it and the reciprocal influence of one on the other (*Theories of Surplus Value*, I; quoted in Rader, 54).

The model is too abstract: for purposes of clarity and wide applicability, it eliminates the specific and overemphasizes the general. It is too parsimonious when confronted with the infinitude of historical reality. In order to be nomothetic, it has to flirt with reductionism and mechanism. Marx takes pain to get this point across:

The form of the relation between rulers and ruled naturally corresponds always with a definite stage in the development of the methods of labor and of its productive social power. This does not prevent the economic basis from showing infinite variations and gradations in its appearance, even though its principal conditions are everywhere the same. This is due to innumerable outside circumstances, natural environment, race peculiarities, outside historical influences, and so forth, all of which must be ascertained by careful analysis (*Capital*, III; Marx, d, 772, alternative translation).

Elsewhere:

Events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historic settings can lead to totally different results. By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, but one will never arrive there by the universal passport of a general historic-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being supra-historical (*Reply to Mikhailovsky*, 1877; in Feuer, 441).

The base–superstructure model is “no universal passport,” for there is none to be had. It is a transhistoric representation of the long-term relationships that obtain between the *main* structural levels of society; as such, it does not take into account a myriad of other variables that may have critical impacts on the characteristics and trajectory of any one individual social formation. Among those, Marx takes note of the climate, the
biophysical properties of the soil and the natural environment, as well as
the physical conditions of their utilization (Rubel and Manale), geographical
location (as in the instance of Ancient Peru, see Giddens,a), relationships with neighboring societies, war, race (Marx,e), and "such modifications as are introduced by migrations, historical events, etc. . . ." (Marx, f,82). The base–superstructure Phantasierbild, to use one of Max Weber's favorite words, does not command an accurate portrayal of the complexity of the nexi that tie the different building blocks of society together: these relations are at the same time more numerous, more entangled, and interactive. This explains why "empirical observation ought, in each particular case, to demonstrate from the facts and without speculation or mystification, the link between the social and political structure and production" (Marx and Engels,a,76; italics added). Why should one bother to study each particular instance of a relationship, if not because it is prone to significant variations?

Not only does the base–superstructure omit causally relevant elements of social reality, but it unduly endows causal links with a rigidity they do not assume in the empirical world. Marx indicates, in a list of "research projects" inserted in Die Grundrisse, that the relations between the levels of the model are not as uniformitarian and unidirectional as the "fundamentalists" would have us believe. "One truly difficult point here is to know how relations of production taken as legal relations undergo unequal development" (Marx,e,363); Marx goes on to acknowledge the fact that Roman law, a superstructural item, played an important role in the formation of early capitalism. Later, he takes a similar tack on art, stating explicitly that no direct, mechanical connection ties it to the mode of production: "( . . .) it is well known that certain periods of artistic development are in no way related to the general evolution of society, nor thus to the development of its material basis" (e,364). There is no question then that Marx recognized both that ideology, law, art, politics, in short, the superstructure, may have a partially autonomous development, and that the degree to which this occurs hinges on factors peculiar to specific societies: it is no happenstance that each time Marx employs the words "specific," "definite," "particular," "historic" setting, period or social form. The upshot of Marx's own comments on the base–superstructure model is that it is a précis of social theory, and as such, is abstracted from concrete historical settings; it may retain empirical relevance for slow-moving macrostructures that change but in the very long term, but it is not the bottom line of Marxian theory: if indeed scientific knowledge "proceeds from the abstract up to the concrete" (Marx,e,350), it is best construed as the baseline for generating a historical sociology that it is incapable of delivering on its own.

The best proof yet of the inadequacy of the base–superstructure model when it comes to concrete sociological analysis is that Marx himself
does not employ it. Witness his studies of French politics and society (a), Great Britain and India (g): he displays much more acumen and analytical flexibility than a straightforward application of the model would elicit. If there is a kernel of truth in the assertion that "as a sociologist, as an analyst of the class content of historical movement, Marx remains the master" (Feuer, XXI), the merit cannot be credited to a fundamentalist vision of base and superstructure.

A dialectical interpretation of the base–superstructure model is easier to reconcile with Marx's position. Such an interpretation rests on three axioms, each of which is clearly matched by the Marxian usage of the model: (1) there is no sharp dualism of base and superstructure: rather they interpenetrate one another in multiple ways; (2) the elements of society stand not in unidirectional but in reciprocal relationships; and (3) although the economic component is paramount in the last analysis (i.e., in most cases and in the long run—as Marx once wrote to Kugelmann, "the reasonable and necessary in nature asserts itself only as a blindly working average"), each structural level is causally pertinent and possesses degrees of relative autonomy (as the labors of Gramsci and of the early Frankfurt School have now made evident).

However, the dialectic does not resolve itself in mere interaction. It involves internal relatedness of societal components. These interact and their essential character is shaped by this interaction. Indeed they form bundles and take on meaning only within such relational wholes (Marx, e, 349). The dialectical model (which will be more fully explained below) is thus not the antidote to, but the symptom of the chief flaw in the base–superstructure model: its failure to convey Marx's philosophy of internal relations (a limpid demonstration of its importance is provided by Ollman (a). The weakness is blatant in the fundamentalist version, but it applies also to the dialectical interpretation. In the latter, the various strata of society are still conceived of as distinct and externally related. This distinctness and externality is precisely what (largely) disappears in the organic totality model. Here the notion of the dialectic escapes the constrained meaning it retains in the interactionist base–superstructure model and can be reinstated so as to accord with the internality of relations.

The historical resultant of societal processes is too complex and concrete to be adequately described by the simplifications and abstractions of economic determinism. Both the fundamentalist and the (limited) dialectical interpretations of the base–superstructure model have reductionist implications that do not harmonize with Karl Marx's skillful sociological analyses. The model may suit the evolution of types of society in the slow-moving, practically static longue durée; however its design is to be severely amended when dealing with concrete social formations. For technology, science, politics, law, and ideology transcend the dualism of base and superstructure. As Rader puts it, "the question is whether an organic
theory of relations can be formulated so as to preserve the truth of the base–superstructure doctrine while eliminating its untruth” (55). The second part of this paper endeavors to show that such a theory is present in Marx’s work.

II. The Social Organism: Anatomy, Physiology, and Growth

The organic totality model retains the potency of the base–superstructure model, while doing away with its shortcomings. As “world hypothesis,” it is rooted in the metaphor of the organism (Pepper)—an organism, Webster’s dictionary tells us, is “anything like a living thing in its complexity of structure or functions.” It suggests that the characteristics of the latter possess homological relevance to those of human societies. This might be summarized as follows. Some parts in the organism play a more decisive role than others—this hierarchical structure preserves the cogency of the base–superstructure model by weighing some factors more heavily than others. The parts are internally and interdependently related—this web of internal links corrects the weakness of reductionism (more precisely that of anti-wholism, as defined by Phillips). The organism develops in time; its development, which involves growth, evolution, and mutation, is charted by and affects the structure of the relationships that bind the parts.

Accordingly, Marx’s account of the organic nature of society comprises both synchronic and diachronic analysis (Mills; Rader). The cross-sectional study of society displays its synchronic structure as a synthesis of internal relatedness and hierarchy: it is the organic model alone. Its diachronic counterpart focuses on the processual aspects of societal history or evolution: it combines organismic with the full-fledged version of the dialectic. We draw them out one after the other.

A

That Marx envisioned societies as “wholes” or totalities (Bottomore,a; Lefebvre,b) is a point we need not dwell on. At bottom, it is one of the chief reasons why no social science “discipline” has proved able either to totally expel or monopolistically claim Marx: if he is, strictly speaking, neither an economist, nor a philosopher, nor a historian, nor a political scientist, nor a sociologist . . . and yet simultaneously all of these at once, it is precisely because his approach distinctively emphasizes the systemic, total character of social phenomena. It assumes a comprehensive anthropology, the possibility of which eludes many of us in these times of academic specialization. In contradistinction to those who advocate the use of analytical
reason, the Marxian "method" contends not only that synthetic reconstruction of the whole is possible, but that it is the mandatory task of a unitary social science. In Lukácsian terminology, "the difference between bourgeois thought and Marxism is the point of view of totality" (27).

One might surmise the relevance of organic totality to Marx's socio-historical inquiry from the recurrence of biologically related vocabulary in his writings. Mills has noted with wit that "Marx's texts are full of metaphors from the reproductive cycle and the hospital delivery room. Things are pregnant; there are false alarms; wombs and midwives abound. And finally there is bloody birth" (128n). Thus in the Preface to the first German edition of Das Kapital, Marx concludes that "the present society is no solid crystal, but an organism capable of change, and is constantly changing" (Tucker,b,298). The efficacy of the organismic metaphor, however, is not limited to the realm of rhetoric; it is commanded by a complete heuristic model by use of which Marx seeks to characterize social systems:

While in the completed bourgeois system, every economic relation presupposes every other in its bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all elements of society to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is historically how it becomes a totality (b,278; italics added).

Elsewhere, tracing the emergence of the Germanic mode of production, Marx stresses that "here the whole does not consist of its separate parts. It is a form of independent organism" (f,78). Society is not the elemental sum of distinct parts, but a particular configuration of internally interdependent components. There is a total functional integration in which each element is what it is because of the network of relationships it entertains with the others and with the whole. To take any one part and to sever it from the whole is tantamount to disfiguring it. By standard definitions, Marx is a genuine organicist.

"Mutual interaction takes place between the different moments. This is the case with every organic whole" (Tucker,b,236). Yet this does not imply that all parts are equally determinant. Just as in the human body our heart, hair, and genetic endowment enjoy disparate levels of causal relevance (for a given phenomenon), so in the social organism,

the conclusion we reach is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity. Production not only predominates over itself (...) but over the other moments as well (...). A definite production thus determines a definite consumption, distribution and exchange, as well as definite relations between the different moments. Admittedly, however, in its one-sided form, production is itself determined by the other moments (Die Grundrisse; in Tucker,b,236).
The Marxian theoretical structure is not softened to the point of motley eclecticism; it does not degenerate into a *mixtum compositum* for the organic model joins together interrelatedness and hierarchy. Base, structure, and superstructure interpenetrate and interact with one another; the causal efficacy of the former is assumed to be the greatest, but it may be curtailed, nay superseded by that of the (super)structure in certain historical conjunctures. The relations that obtain between the "moments" of social activity ought to be grasped in their *definite forms*, that is, through analysis of concrete social formations situated in space and time. Thus the Marxian image of society is a structure of structures which displays hierarchy, subordination, and complex interdependence—not among individuals or "functions," but among discrepant structures: forces and relations of production, bourgeoisie and proletariat, civil society and the state—the shape and limits of which cannot be extrapolated from specific historical contexts into "universal" statements. The organic model works at a level of abstraction one notch below that of the base-superstructure model.

Marx's organic vision is evidently an offshoot of Hegel's influence. Hegel applied the organic model to social formations in order to demonstrate the unfolding of the world-spirit through the centuries and its eventual realization in the state and the "universal" bureaucracy. Marx concurs with Hegel that "it is a great step forward to have seen that the political state is an organism, and that therefore its various powers are no longer to be seen as inorganic but as the product of living, rational divisions of function" (h,66). But there is a fundamental contrast between Marx and Hegel (and for that matter, most subsequent "organicists"): whereas the latter extols organic harmony and the basic soundness of societal development, the former diagnoses a social pathology that he deems terminal (Rader; Tucker, a). The organic focus reflects Marx's concern with organic disunity—the schisms and built-in *contradictions* that impair the unity of the whole and propel it along the path of history. Not homeostasis and healthy functioning, but the accelerating development of mutation-triggering diseases: the fettering of the forces by the relations of production, the disjointedness of polity and economy, the confrontation of potential universal affluence with debasing poverty, of the rational organization in the firm with the irrationality of the market, the escalating opposition of classes. The whole thrust of Marx's involved study of the emergence of capitalism, as well as his more sketchy attempts at pre-capitalist history-building, is to identify the pathological elements in the bourgeois social organism: it is an etiology of capitalist society.

This brings us to the threshold of our second sub-part: diachronic analysis, or the coupling of the organic and dialectical models. But first let us recapitulate our argument so far. We have distinguished three models or variants thereof. The fundamentalist version of base-superstructure, because of its mechanistic and static character, misrepresents Marx's actual
theoretical position. Its emphasis on the determining power of the mode of production is retained and "softened up" by the dialectical interpretation; nevertheless the latter does not sufficiently qualify the economic reductionism and the dichotomy implicit in the base–superstructure metaphor. Both models are in turn transcended and absorbed by the organic whole; within this third model, which features a hierarchy of structures in constant and variable interaction, the mode of production is dominant among the causes, but all the elements are tightly interdependent and enjoy degrees of "relative autonomy"—hence it is inexact to affirm that production alone determines historical and social events. In passing from the base–superstructure model to organic totality, we shift levels of abstraction downward and abridge the time–space set concerned by theory, so that propositions may gain in precision and empirical relevance what they lose in generality.

B

In his afterword in the second Russian edition of Capital, Marx approvingly quotes the review of a Russian scholar to the extent that "the scientific value of such an inquiry lies in the disclosing of the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development, death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher one." Marx assesses the passage as an apt description of his method. Yet he goes on to ask of his reviewer: "What else is he picturing but the dialectical method?" (Tucker, b,130). The dialectic, indeed, assumes a central place in Karl Marx's overall scheme; we now fathom its essential meaning and adumbrate its role as the dynamic principle of social–organic change.

The dialectic is probably the most misconstrued of Marx's models. Its exposition is oftentimes reduced to triadic formulas patterned after the Hegelian "thesis–antithesis–synthesis." Although this contains some truth, as such it is insufficient. For it is not so much the number of phases a situation has which makes it dialectical as a specific relation of opposition between these phases which generates a succession of other moments. The necessary condition of a dialectical situation is at least two phases, distinct but not separate. The sufficient condition of a dialectical situation is that the two phases stand in a relation of opposition and interaction such that the resultant (1) eliminates some of the structural elements of the interacting phases, (2) retains some others, and (3) exhibits emergent, that is, qualitatively new properties. The key to the dialectic lies in the polysemic character of the German verb "aufheben." It takes three English verbs to cover the range of meaning spanned by the notion of Aufhebung: to preserve, to cancel/abolish, to transcend/raise up (Giddens, b). It thus brings together the positive, the negative, and the transformative. Marx, after Hegel (Soll), used the word to connote action whereby
a higher quality entity emerges from and supersedes a lower one (something like the "harmony-dissonance-explosion-equilibrium at a higher level" sequence forwarded by Shaw; see also Chodak). Such action he saw as characterizing organic development in the case of both individuals and societies. The application of the dialectical method—and emphatically NOT the substance of it alone—to sociohistoric formations becomes the active principle of growth and transformation in the social organism: dialectic and organic totality combine to furnish "root images" (Blumer) for the study of societal evolution as a developmental process involving both rupture and continuity. A simple schema may highlight this multifarious character of the dialectic (Figure 2).

Each rectangle encloses a space of essential properties. Note that thesis and antithesis overlap: it is the principle of the mutual penetration of polar opposites. They stand against one another and interact, since they are joined by internal relations: the law of development through contradiction. This constant flux of dynamic oppositions yields a synthesis of a qualitatively different nature. This may be taken to be the law of the transformation of quantity into quality.¹³

By means of the organic totality model, Marx is able to theorize in terms of wider and wider structures of organic wholeness: the individual, society, nature, the world-system. Consequently the dialectical model provides the dynamic motor-cause of change within and between each of these structures, determining an ensemble of contradictory interactions which are resolved through human and social history. Alienation and its supersession constitute the subjective dialectic of human existence and essence; the passage from one stage of sociohistoric development to the next spells out the objective side of the dialectic: the conflict between dynamic technology (the ever-expanding forces) and static class structure (the fixed relations), the opposition of bourgeoisie and proletariat, of the state and civil society. Here is the place to reiterate our preliminary warning about the use and meaning of models. A model is a mental construction which aids in acquiring knowledge: it is NOT a literal description of reality. Too many Marxists and others have mistakenly collapsed the latter into the former and read the dialectic as a substantive theoretical proposition—not least among them Engels himself.¹⁴ As part of his theoretical apparatus for viewing reality, the dialectic guides Marx and provides a prism by means of which change is brought into focus and kept there. "But it is what he finds through his research, the real relations of specific entities, rather than the dialectic, which is the substance of all his proofs and projections" (Ollman,b,60).

Dialectical resolution of conflict and opposition is the motor-power of all development. In the social organism, it is a destructive, additive, and transformative process which accounts for growth and progress, social-historical continuity and transformation (the shift from one social form
to another). But one must beware of reifying the model and metamorphosing its moments into self-sustained, self-explanatory mechanisms. For the subject of this historical process is the revolutionary class as carrier of the transformative principle ("Of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive force is the revolutionary class itself," Marx,e,209; "History is the judge—its executioner the proletariat," McLellan,a,208); the object of the transformation is social relations ("the aggregate of the relations in which the agents of production stand to nature and to one another," "the sum of the relations in which individuals stand to one another," Bottomore and Rubel,96,147; see also Tucker,a). In a word, "the dialectic is the principle of social activity, its medium is the class struggle, its spearhead, in class society, the social revolution" (Hook,b,68). Human agency thus stands at the core of historical causation: societies do not change by themselves, they change because of human activity—chiefly productive activity. The instruments of production can never be isolated from their social context; their development is but the conditio sine qua non of revolution. "A radical social revolution is tied to certain historical conditions of economic development; these are its prerequisites" (McLellan,a,211; italics added). But if "it is true that the economic dynamics of private property brings it to its dissolution and that the process is independent of it, unconsciously realizing itself against the will of proprietors," it is precisely "because it produces the proletariat, which is to say misery aware
of its moral and physical deprivation, human self-alienation aware of itself, and for that reason seeking to transcend itself" (Marx,e,98; italics added). Consciousness and purposive action are necessary variables in the triggering of societal change: the opportunity for revolution, that is, for inaugurating development at a higher stage, exists only when objective (social-structural) conditions and subjective (social-psychological) readiness coincide. The core of the Marxian dialectic is the unity of the objective and subjective factors. No trace of sociologism and mechanism survives when one unravels the meaning of the dialectic as plugged into the organic totality model. "History does nothing (...). It is not 'history' which uses men as a means of achieving its own ends—as if it were an individual person. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends" (McLellan,a,125; italics added). That capitalism will NOT automatically dissolve itself is evident in the light of Marx's commitment to political activism and organization—for only class struggle can put an end to the class struggle (Tucker,a) and make for the emergence of a new historical subject. If life is a unity in which the inner and outer develop concomitantly, then institutional and psychological transformation are necessarily interdependent. This interdependence Marx subsumes under the concept of praxis: "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can only be grasped and rationally understood as revolutionary praxis" (Bottomore and Rubel,b; translation slightly altered; see also the involved discussions in Lefebvre,b, and Hook,b). We are in total agreement with Sydney Hook's forceful statement that "the dialectical principle in Marx expresses primarily the logic of historical consciousness and class action" (b,76).

The wedding of the models of organic structure and dialectical development is the conceptual crux of Karl Marx's theory of social crisis and transformation. Base and superstructure lose their reductionist implications if regarded as reciprocal moments within an organic whole, whose inner workings must be grasped sui generis; rather they translate the principle of hierarchy that characterizes any organism. Economic factors cannot be abstracted, that is, severed from the totality of relations that Marx calls society and that constitute a definite social order—one which has a historical beginning, development, and end. There is no economic factor independent of this structure (the synchronic dimension) and process (the diachronic axis); its causal prevalence is not a dogma to be upheld notwithstanding evidence to the contrary, but a structural hypothesis whose range of validity and accuracy is to be constantly reascertained from one definite society to the next. Nevertheless, Marx came to believe that the historical data he gathered warranted consolidation of this hypothesis into a theoretical proposition, which he then used as a key to unlock the mysteries of societal change. In so doing, he crossed the borderline between
model and theory—we shall not follow him here but will remain in the purlieu of the former.

Marx's vision of society is wholistic. It portrays society as a hierarchy of interpenetrating and interacting structures, whose organic interplay is strongly, albeit not fully, determined by the field of production—the exact extent of the dominance of economic factors demanding to be evaluated anew for each given social formation. As built-in contradictions blossom, are resolved and recreated at a higher stage, the total social organism is transformed. This transformation is both human/social-psychological and institutional/social-structural; whether humans monitor it (as in communist society) or not (pre-communist formations before the epochal transition), it is the product of human activity and constant self-creation as they react on society and nature; it presupposes human consciousness and collective action. The meeting of the inner and outer dialectics tolls the bell of social revolution, which signals the emergence of a new social organism out of the womb of the older.

III. Analytical Division of Labor

We now return to our original question: Why is it that Marx remains so discrepantly (mis)interpreted and—so we believe—so often grossly misunderstood? Part of the answer is that Marxian theory encompasses, or, better, strives to incorporate both structural and processual aspects of social causation at any level of analysis from the specific to the general (i.e., from the idiographic to the transhistoric as construed by the historical particularist "school" after Windelband). In order to realize this fusion in one integrated corpus, Marx used several distinguishable "models" heuristically and alternately. Failure to discern these models, to circumscribe their respective areas of application, compatibility, and divergence is at the root of many of the distortions that Marxian theory has suffered in the course of its still partial—one should say: marginal in the case of American sociology—integration into mainstream sociology (Bottomore,b).

The deep originality of Marx's work, the sociological wealth it still contains reside in his having constructed a model of models. Far from being monolithic, Marx's "root image" of society is composite and yields theoretical insights of quite varied natures. Three dimensions are relevant in this respect, and permit us to spell out the analytical realm proper to each model: time-span, focus of analysis, and level of analysis. We now conclude by throwing into relief the respective triadic combinations appropriate to base–superstructure, organic totality, and dialectic.

The base–superstructure model is essentially a structural account of the most abstract aspects of social reality. In its fundamentalist form, it
severely separates out various strata and ascribes to the lowest of them all causal and explanatory powers. The more sophisticated version favored by Marx and Engels may be labelled "dialectical" in the rather restricted sense that it features causal interaction among the strata, while nonetheless conserving its stress on the ultimate weight of the technoeconomic base "in the long run." This model, which concerns types of societies (modes of production in a loose usage of the term), is nomothetic and abstract: nomothetic in that its theoretical focus is on the macrostructural links that obtain in all class societies irrespective of the historical epochs to which they belong; abstract in the sense that the relations to which it draws attention are selected and detached from the complex dynamic whole which confers their efficacy and meaning.\textsuperscript{17} Thus when Marx, in the first nine chapters of Capital, seeks to uncover "the economic law of motion of modern society," he has in mind "general abstract definitions which are more or less applicable to all forms of society" (Bottomore and Rubel,\textsuperscript{17}). The same is true with his famous "Preface" and with the sweeping overview of human history presented in the Communist Manifesto. There Marx employs the base-superstructure model, as the one best suited to his purpose—a general, abstract account of societal structures in macrochronic perspective. As such, this model is not designed for detailed historical analysis of discrete social facts; hence it is vain to castigate it for not being able to deliver what it never promised.

The weakness of the base-superstructure model lies in its inclination to reductionism and mechanism, and, in the case of its fundamentalist variant, to epiphenomenalism. Moreover, it provides no guideline for separating the various strata of society and allocating structural components among them. Finally, it is discrepant with much microchronic historical evidence and does not explicate how these structures are maintained and reproduced \textit{in concreta}. The "organic totality" does away with these shortcomings with one stroke, at the cost of moving toward a more metaphoric vision of society, one that forbids neat schematic renderings of social change—as the absence here of any diagrammatic summary of the model testifies. When Marx attacks capitalism, it is not on moral or humanitarian grounds; his critique stems from the notion that it is a "dysfunctional" (read: sick) social organism, ultimately incapable of curing the diseases it generates, except by means of a mutation which will radically reorganize its basic physiology.\textsuperscript{18} Marx's perspective, then, is concrete, that is, it grasps society as an integral unfragmented whole which has grown and is growing together; although written at age nineteen, the following excerpt from Marx's Letter to His Father (November 10, 1837) vividly summarizes the point:

In the concrete rendering of the living world of thought, such as law, the state, nature, philosophy [which Marx opposes to its abstract counterpart in metaphysics
and mathematics, which dogmatically remain "mere representations" which "do not develop into anything else"), the object itself ought to be grasped in its development. One must not introduce arbitrary distinctions. The principle of the object itself ought to emerge as contradictory and find its unity in its development (e,13).

Societies grow not as structural types but as social formations plunged in specific natural and sociohistorical environments. This requires that the analyst curtail the span of attention to definite geo-temporal ensembles; this is exactly what Marx does in his own historical studies (e.g., Class Struggles in France concentrates on one economic, social, and political conjuncture, that of 1848–50—Marx,a). The principle of societal growth is in turn furnished by the model of "dialectical development," which encapsulates interaction, conservation, supersession, and emergence. The latter is a processual catalyst whose combination with the other two models renders it relevant at both the concrete and abstract levels of analysis. However, its efficiency is maximal in concrete depictions of the specific processes proper to the functioning of given social organisms.

The instrumentality of each of the models is therefore not to be assessed in abstracto, but in relation to the level and focus of analysis for which it is designed to operate. Regions of overlap and relevance may be pictured as in Figure 3.

It is not only that Marx's models find given "analytical zones" preferentially allocated to them; each of them also has its kairos, a "right time" for its employment. Braudel's merit is precisely to have pointed to "the necessity to confront the models ( . . . ) with the idea of duration [durée]; for their meaning and explanatory power hinges substantially on the temporality they imply" (64). The historian further deplores the misuses of the models that have resulted from disregard for the temporal limits inherent in each of them:

I shall protest ( . . . ) not against the model, but against the use to which it is being put ( . . . ). These models have been fixed permanently in their simplicity; they have been given the force of law and treated as ready-made, automatic explanations, applicable in all places to all societies. Whereas pushing them down the changing flows of time would highlight their basic framework, which is strong and tightly knit. The latter would re-emerge endlessly, each time with new nuances brought out at the contact of new structures which would themselves be likely to be defined by other rules and thus other models. In this way has the creative power of the most powerful analysis of the last century been shackled (80–1).

The plurality of models is thus to be referred to a plurality of temporalities. The base–superstructure model is general, abstract, macrostructural, and macrochronic: it operates in the longue durée. The organic totality is more specific, concrete, and processual: its time frame is the conjunctural, the medium term of particular societies grasped at definite
moments of their evolution. The dialectic is basically processual, but can function for analyses either concrete and specific, or abstract and general, and in durations ranging from the short to the long term, depending on what other model it is plugged into, as shown in Table 1.

Two brief examples may illustrate the working of this scheme in Marx's writings.

1. The problem of SOCIAL CLASS: apart from its skeletal and unfinished character, Marx's theory of class is commonly excoriated for being inconsistent: on the one hand he claims there are but three classes (capitalist, landowner, wage-laborer), on the other, he goes on to talk of the small holding peasantry, the farm-laborers, the intellectuals, and the Lumpenproletariat as classes (Giddens and Held; Marx,a). And Marx's stance on the issue is apparently even more entangled. In Capital, Volume II, he sets forth two basic classes; these become three in Volume III of the same book. Five are named in the Manifesto, as in Misère de la Philosophie. Seven appear in the Class Struggles in France, while his 1851 article "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Germany" lists eight classes, or fractions thereof. All those statements NEED NOT be contradictory, for they are not situated on the same plane. In Capital, Marx proposes a general, abstract analysis of the class structure of capitalist society qua capitalist; three classes are characteristic of it at the time of its inception, yet its internal dynamics make for the subsumption of land under capital and, in the long run, promise to leave but two classes, the capitalist and the proletarian (Gurvitch). The reasoning here is premised on the base-superstructure model; its focus is the long-term movement of a structural type ab-
Table 1. THE MODELS AND THEIR COMBINATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BASE-SUPERSTRUCTURE</th>
<th>ORGANIC TOTALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by itself</td>
<td>FUNDAMENTALIST</td>
<td>ORGANIC STRUCTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VERSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>combined with</td>
<td>DIALECTICAL</td>
<td>ORGANIC DEVELOPMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIALECTICAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>VERSION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abstracted from concrete social-historical contexts—mostly from those of eighteenth and nineteenth century England. The object under study is the class implications of the workings of one economic mode of production. Not so in Marx's historical reports on the social and political evolution of France and Germany. There he is chiefly concerned with the class basis and the class outcomes of political fights crystallizing around national crises; his “census” of classes thus refers to concrete, processual accounts of class relations in specific social-historical circumstances. If, as the organic totality permits, the political realm is partially autonomous from the other institutional sectors of a society, it is logical that Marx should differentiate more numerous “class positions,” for each political conjuncture calls for a definite differentiation of short-run class interests (for an analogous argument, see Poulantzas's discussion of class “place” vs. class “position” in Giddens and Held, 101–11).

In conclusion, if Marx's taxonomies of class seem to not cohere neatly, it is simply because they are the products of convergent yet different analytic interests; strictly speaking, a categorical enumeration of classes in capitalist society is devoid of meaning so long as no coordinates of analysis are set. The inconsistency thus lies not with Marx's theory of class, but with the obsession of his critics that it should be identical irrespective of the level, type, and time-frame of analysis—in which case it would radically contradict the typically Marxian insistence on the principle of historical specificity (Mills).

2. The problem of SOCIETAL EVOLUTION: what with the renewed interest in macrochronic structural change attested to by the rise of neo-dependency and world-system theory, and by the resurgence of evolutionary concerns (Moseley and Wallerstein), it would seem that Marx's conception of societal evolution is in dire need of a systematic, theoretically up-to-date discussion. We do not attempt such an argument here, for it would take us too far afield from the theme of this article. Rather, we offer some comments which might form its outline.

Marx is often mistakenly categorized as a "classical evolutionist." On the basis of the notion that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future"
(Tucker, b, 296) and other epigrammatic statements proffered by Marx on the topic, Marxian theory is assimilated to a species of mechanical, immanent, uniformitarian, unilinear evolutionism. This is, typically, a fallacious overextension of limited theses to levels of analysis and temporal frames to which they are NOT addressed. For Marx’s position is emphatically NOT that assigned to him above, as close scrutiny of his writings makes evident. One page of his correspondence suffices to demonstrate the falsity involved in the transformation of his “historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into a historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself.” In his Reply to Mikhailovsky (Feuer, 440ff.), Marx castigates so deceptive a rendering of his thought; he develops a brief case study of how, on concentration of landed property and formation of “big money capital,” the plebeians of Ancient Rome became not proletarians but “a mob of do-nothings,” and concludes by discarding the very possibility of a universal theory of evolution. Yet some of his writings do easily lend themselves to “universalization.” His views are thus far more complex than generally regarded. First, there is the possibility that they themselves have undergone substantial evolution; second, the certitude that each of Marx’s assertions on the subject-matter bears the imprint of the general argument of which it is a part: philosophical and highly polemic in his youthful writings, political and militant in the Manifesto period, economic and scholarly by the turn of the 1860s. One cannot pretend to recompose Marx’s theory of evolution without regard to the variations in the intellectual, rhetorical, and political context of his remarks, as well as to the type of audience to which they are directed. Last, we think that implicit in Marx is a theoretical distinction akin to that made by Marshall Sahlins between “general” and “specific” evolution (Sahlins and Service); the former is covered by the base–superstructure model, the latter by the organic totality model which again implies Marx’s crucial idea of the historical specificity of sociological relations—one expounds meta-laws pertaining to different types of social formation (ancient, feudal, capitalist, etc.); the other fills in the framework with empirically derived, historically bounded generalizations (laws).

If indeed there are distinct models in Marx, one must be careful to cast each of his theoretical propositions in the space of relevance of the model it is derived from. For then it is the reader’s mistake, and not Marx’s, if any one model is asked to explain that which the others are designed to handle. Now, we have, throughout this paper, emphasized the compatibility of the models by focussing on their articulation. But there clearly are obdurate problems of consistency when one relates each model to the world-hypothesis which nurtures it (Table 2).

Interactionism, mechanism, and organicism are not easily reconcilable and it remains to be shown just how exactly they cohabit in Marx’s
Table 2. MODEL, ROOT-IMAGE, AND WORLD-HYPOTHESIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>root-image</th>
<th>world-hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BASE—SUPERSTRUCTURE</td>
<td>building</td>
<td>MECHANISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANIC TOTALITY</td>
<td>organism</td>
<td>ORGANICISM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIALECTICAL DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>dialogue</td>
<td>INTERACTIONISM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from S. C. Pepper.

reasoning—which is a different matter from how the propositions they generate do so. Yet the conceptual "looseness" they authorize in forming together what Max Black calls a "composite metaphor" (229), far from constituting a hindrance to theory construction, is a major asset in the logic of discovery: it introduces a fruitful tension within the "infrastructure" of theory, one that may well account for the lasting vitality of Marxian/ist scholarship, as well as for the existence of a diversity of Marxisms.

This unresolved issue suggests that we finally take a stand as to what we believe to be Marx's total position. We hope that the foregoing has indicated that the organic totality model—specifically in its developmental dimension—seems to us most representative of Karl Marx's overall theoretical stance. But more important is our conviction that *the question itself must always be framed with a time-space reference in it*. The debate is by no means strictly sociological; it chiefly concerns the "philosophic riff-raff known as epistemology" (Strauss). This brings us to the heated question of causality in Marxian theory. If we accept that the organic totality, with its tenets of hierarchical dependence and internal relatedness, is more faithful to Marx's work than the other models, the problem has to be reworked so that its solution(s) fit this model. Linear and teleological conceptions of causality can be discarded outright; Althusser's notion of structural causality, albeit a great advance beyond the other two, is too moot to be satisfactory. To proclaim, as Veyne does in his covert critique of Marx, that the "notion of determining cause belongs to the prehistory of epistemology" (229n) is of little help. Likewise, the more appreciative efforts of Henri Janne leave the difficulty intact. What may be needed then is a more subtle theory of causality, one where all the variables are systematically related, yet assigned different weights both as causes and as consequences, the structure of their relations evolving in accordance with historical laws. Such an idea of "organic causality" remains to be hammered out.

"The riddle is not solved by such terms of speech, but merely formulated differently" (Marx,g,170). We have not found neat little answers to the countless questions that Marx's work continues to pose for sociolo-
gists. But if we have reached our goal, we have at least partially contributed to their reformulation and uncovered a whole nest of fresh issues. French epistemologist Gaston Bachelard wrote that only scientific questions may receive scientific answers—it is high time we heed his call and apply this principle to social science, and to Marxian theory first of all.

Notes

1. Most notably so in American sociology, for complex reasons some of which are adumbrated by Gurney. Suffice to note here that “national” sociologies differ greatly in the degree of their “hospitality” to Marx’s scheme, and that these variations have a lot to do with differences in social structures as well as divergences in the levels and types of institutionalization enjoyed by these sociologies.

2. Rader’s interpretation, which we draw heavily upon, is more coherent and comprehensive than that propounded by others: e.g., the “process model” of Buckley, McQuain and Amburgey’s “systems theory,” Friedrich’s “system paradigm,” or the Althusserian “hidden structure” (Althusser and Balibar). Its prime merit is that it struggles to take all of Marx’s writings into account, and not some especially selected part of them.

3. As Marx intended it to be, for he strongly held that given its historicity, no closure of a system of social knowledge could possibly be effected: “The formulation on thought of an exact picture of the world-system in which we live is impossible for us, and will always remain impossible. If at any time in the evolution of mankind such a final, conclusive system of the interconnections within the world (...) were brought to completion, this would mean that human knowledge had reached its limit, and, from the moment when society had been brought into accord with that system, further historical evolution would be cut short—which would be an absurd idea, pure nonsense” (Marx and Engels, b, 234).

4. First, Marx’s models are also paradigmatic (à la Merton) in many respects: cf. his (rather cryptic) exposition of the method of political economy in the “General Introduction” to his Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (Marx, c, e), but we opt to define these out of the scope of our present inquiry. Second, we are aware of the arbitrary nature of the analytic distinction between theory and model, particularly concerning Marx, whose work absorbed and synthesized multifarious strands of European social thought, and who never sat down to intentionally sketch either one as distinct from the other—indeed he never conceived of himself as a system-builder and repeatedly refuted the accusation, whence his famed “I am not a Marxist” rejoinder (Rubel, 37). The present proviso must consequently be appended to our all too hasty consideration of the issue: there is partial fusion of theory and model when the latter attains sufficient precision in the weighing of causal relations between its constituent elements and when the structural parallels it suggests come to generate assertions that can be empirically questioned (“Insofar as these ‘scientific metaphors’ unveil the principles of structural homologies that hitherto laid buried in phenomenal differences, they are . . . ‘theories in miniature’,” Bourdieu et al., 79). What we have then is a theoretic model. It will become apparent from our discussion that Marx’s models enjoy contrasting degrees of pro-pinquity to the latter type: the base–superstructure model has strong theoretic leanings, whereas the organic totality clearly lies closer to the purely metaphorical end of the continuum. These remarks are not the unwitting avowal that our distinction does not hold water, but acknowledgment that the issue demands further reflection.

5. This is a standard translation. Differences not devoid of theoretical import may be found in the one offered by Progress Publishers of Moscow, where the relations are merely “appropriate” to the forces of production, the mode of production is said to “condition” and not determine “the general process of social, political, and intellectual life” (Marx, c, 20–1).

6. It is to be remembered that the terms “historical materialism” and “dialectical materialism"
were NEVER once employed by Marx himself (they were coined by Engels and Plekhanov respectively). That he talked of "the materialist conception of history" or of the "materialist conditions of production" is symptomatic evidence that he himself construed it as a tentative approach rather than as a fixed system of ideas (McLellan,a).

7. See the cogent argument that science interpenetrates the forces of production while the state interpenetrates the relations of production in Rader.

8. The brunt of Marx's objections to bourgeois political economy is that it "naturalizes" what are but historical, transient laws, and that it does not reach beyond analysis (etymologically: the breaking up of a whole into its component parts) to show how "the relations of production of any society form a totality" (Marx,e,185). Thus in a clearly nonfundamentalist passage of his rejoinder to Proudhon's *Philosophie de la Misère* (1846), he lashes out against its author in these terms: "In building an ideological system with the concepts of political economy, the limbs of the social system are dislocated. The different members of society are transformed into so many separate societies, which emerge one after the other. How, indeed, could the single logical formula of movement, of sequence, of time, explain the body of society, in which all relations coexist simultaneously and support one another?" (Marx,e,186; italics added. See also Marx's critical notes on James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy* in Marx,h,259–78).

9. Pitiful testimony to this is the confusion of student bookstores when they encounter the basely material problem of allotting Marx to one topic area and one section in the shop. A study of Marx's slow (and incomplete) pilgrimage from the remote shelves of philosophy and history to the more familiar ones of politics and sociology could yield telling insights for a history of academe's relationship to Marx.

10. For instance: philosophy is "the head" and the proletariat "the heart" of revolution (Marx,h,54); the nineteenth century is "pregnant with its contrary" (in Rubel and Manale, 128); class struggle is most radical "in old complex social organisms" (Marx,e,282); bureaucracy is "a terrifying parasitic organism which covers the body of French society like a membrane and obstructs all of its pores" (Marx,e,312); the "limbs" of society must not be "dislocated" from its "body" by analysis (see note 8).

11. Phillips lists five holistic theses characteristic of organicism: (1) inadequacy of the analytical method when applied to certain entities such as societies; (2) the whole is more than the sum of its parts; (3) the whole determines the nature of the parts; (4) the parts cannot be understood if considered in isolation from the whole; (5) dynamic interdependence and interrelatedness of the parts. A good case can be made that Marx does abide by these rules, at least in basic methodology. *Obiter dictum*: we are merely presenting, not upholding, Marx's philosophy of internal relations; we are fully aware that cogent criticisms have been levied against it (among them, see Phillips; Wittgenstein), but they do not concern us here.

12. In this section, we draw heavily from dispersed writings of Karl Marx (sections on Hegel and Feuerbach in his *Early Writings* and *The German Ideology*, discussions on method in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, and his correspondence with Engels and Kugelmann), as well as from Hook (b), Lefebvre (a), and Marcuse.

13. We are not prepared, nor do we wish, to present a thorough defense of each of the so-called "laws of the dialectic." Therefore we are not intent on forcing a one-to-one correspondence between the latter and the defining moments of the dialectic; whether there is such a correspondence is simply not at issue here—after all, it is Engels, and not Marx, who formulated these "laws." Our own judgment is that they are burdensome and more confusing than enlightening.

14. Chiefly in his *Dialectics of Nature* written in 1874–80. The distortion was aggravated by Lenin in *Materialism and Empiriocriticism* (1908) where, on practical political grounds, Marx's epistemology is turned upside-down (McLellan,b). If the Marxism of Marx and the Marxism of Engels are generally congruent, they part distinctively on this issue, as one scholar notes: "For Marx, the ultimate determinant of the course of history was man and his needs, but for Engels it came to be matter and its motion" (Meyer,42). For a compact statement of how it was Engels's vision that set the tone for orthodox Marxism, see Coser.
15. "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness and for the cause itself, a profound transformation of man is necessary, which can only take place in a practical movement, in a revolution; therefore, revolution is necessary not only because it is the only means by which the dominant class may be overthrown, but also because only through revolution can the revolutionary class succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew" (Marx, e, 157–8).

16. "There is nothing a priori in Marx's philosophy; it is naturalistic, historical, and empirical throughout" (Hook, a, 6). Marx himself vigorously stated: "I am not at all in favor of raising our own dogmatic banner (. . . ) saying: Here is the truth, bow down before it!" (Feuer, 225). Argumentations along similar lines are found in the introductions to Rader and to Bottomore and Rubel.

17. To abstract (ab-trahere) literally means to draw away. Read the enlightening exposition of Rader on the influence of the expressivist notion of "abstraction" (as severance from an organic complex) on Hegel and Marx in Rader (150–9). For a similar and earlier argument on political "abstraction," see Kahn (169–71); for a critique of economic and human "abstraction," Marx (h, 270–8 and 280ff.), and Ollman (b).

18. That Marx thought that capitalism was "moral" is demonstrated by Tucker (a). As to the dysfunctionality of capitalism and the dominance of disruptive as opposed to integrative mechanisms, we forcefully reject Smelser's "comparison" (a contamination by apposition is a better word to describe his tactics) of Marxian and functionalism (see his "Introduction" to Marx, g).

19. The notional dyad made up of "chronos" (formal time) and "kairos" (the "right time") was formulated by Tillich and reactivated by Wallerstein. The latter retrieves the distinction to denote the phase of transition toward a socialist world-order, which he believes we have entered. We use it for a different purpose, that of underlining the indispensable link between the model and the time set in which it is operative. A host of authors have signaled how critical the notion of time is to Marxian theory (e.g., Bottomore, a; Braudel; Mills; Wallerstein), and Marx himself wrote that "all economics can be reduced in the last analysis to the economics of time" (in McLellan, a, 73).

20. The concept was first exposed by Braudel in a famous 1958 article entitled "History and the Social Sciences: the longue durée." It has since acquired a central place in the works of French historians of the Annales "school," but drawn little response from sociologists . . . to whom it was explicitly addressed! Michel Vovelle brilliantly traces the history of the notion, from the methodological and theoretical breakthrough it entailed to the ambiguities it still carries.

21. Various social theorists have put out worthwhile introductions to the whole issue. Gurvitch inventories the "Marxian classes" in chronological order of appearance; Ollman (b) surveys Marx's utilization of the concept; Giddens (c) and Dahrendorf expose and criticize Marx's theory of class while Ossowski confronts it with other schemes. Giddens and Held have compiled Marx's key pronouncements on the subject.

22. That is, capitalism as an ideal-type, whose economic earmark is the extortion of surplus value on behalf of the capitalist. Hughes long ago argued that it is Marx, rather than Weber, who inaugurated the methodical use of ideal-types in the construction of social theory.

23. "To categorize" comes from the Greek kategorhai meaning "to accuse of in public" (stressed by P. Bourdieu in seminar at the Collège de France, Paris). The act of accusation is often superficially convincing, as in Nisbet, Aron, Wilshire, or Chodak. Hints of its weakness are given in Hobsbawm's excellent introduction to selected excerpts from Die Grundrisse on pre-capitalist societies (Marx, f).

24. We hope to be able to demonstrate it fully in a later article devoted exclusively to the issue of evolutionism in Marx's thought. The textual raw material therefore will be found in The German Ideology, The Communist Manifesto, Die Grundrisse, and Marx's correspondence and articles on Russia, India, France, and England. A fruitful consideration of the topic is already provided by Legros.
25. "The error [of economism] stems, in the last analysis, from the use of a reasoning in terms of classical causality; Marx's dialectic would have led him to totally correct results, had it been premised on the principle of correlation between factors." We do not share Janne's oversimplifying optimism.

26. In no way are the variables (technology, class relations, ideology, etc.) to be regarded as equal; this easy way out of the dilemma, which is (erroneously) proposed by Needleman and Needleman, is in blatant contradiction with the structure of Marx's explanations, no matter what model one wishes to uphold.

27. Ironically, it is not "structural" sociologists, but the symbolic interactionists who have shown sensitivity to this issue. Various authors of this tradition have called for the building of an "organic scheme" to respect and convey the natural properties of the social world, so that the relations between the variables not be severed from their "here and now" context. For an instance dealing with public opinion studies, see Blumer.

References


Avineri, Shlomo. 1968. The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx. Cambridge University Press.


Wilshire, Bruce. 1968. Romanticism and Evolution, the Nineteenth Century. Capricorn Books.