

**PRAXIS Vs DETERMINISM IN MARX
- A RECONSTRUCTION -**

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The crisis of Marxist social theory is mainly due to the deterministic character imposed upon it by the positivist mode of interpretations which has been the dominant mode throughout the history of Marxist discourse. We here assume that a non-positivist reformulation of Marx's scheme, especially of its epistemological foundation, would provide a secure methodological ground for the construction of a Marxist paradigm of social analysis which is totally free from the deterministic fallacies. This paper is an attempt towards such a reformulation.*

'Positivist Marxism' depends primarily on a deterministic conception of man. Deterministic mode of interpretation involves on the one hand materialism; consciousness is reduced to matter, or ideas are reduced to material circumstances. On the other hand it involves sociology, in that everything subjective is reducible to the objective social circumstances. Man, according to materialist/sociological framework is the product of society and therefore is causally determined by society. Human subjectivity is a derivative category and all that are subjective, namely ideas, concepts, thoughts etc., are epiphenomenal. Undoubtedly, such a framework presupposes the crude empiricist paradigm of subject-object relation, that is, the paradigm which speaks for the passivity of the subjective domain and the primacy and the autonomy of the objective domain.

Our question here is whether Marx's theory really implies such an epistemological paradigm? That is, does marxism really involve the claims of material/sociological determinism? This paper attempts to answer this question in the negative. More specifically, we here argue that Marx's theory has a dialectical foundation, comprising the ideas of praxis, creativity, freedom etc., which invariably is antideterministic and thus is antipositivist. For developing

such an argument, our strategy would be to compare the epistemological presuppositions of materialist/sociological approach with those of Marx's dialectical system and to show that how the former contradicts the latter.

Regarding materialist/sociological approach, before coming to the epistemological issues we offer a brief analytical exposition of the approach. We assume the theory of ideology of Karl Mannheim, the systematic expounder of the school of thought called sociology of knowledge, as the model of materialist/ sociological approach and try to have a close look on it. The reason for confining our study to the theory of Karl Mannheim is that it clearly presupposes an epistemological position which provides the methodological ground for the whole of sociologist. And, the justification for treating Mannheim's system as the model of the materialist/sociological approach lies in our observation that his sociological theory of knowledge is grounded on the materialistic interpretation of (Marx's) concept of knowledge and ideology.

In the first section we have a brief sketch of Mannheimian theory of ideology. In the second section we try to view how Mannheimian sociological model depends on the materialist interpretation of Marx's model, and thereby, to justify our claim that the epistemological framework of deterministic Marxism is provided by the concepts of both sociologism and materialism. In the final section our focal attention would be on the problem that how Marx model at the very fundamental level contradicts the materialist/sociological model.

Mannheim's Theory of Ideology : An exposition

Central to Mannheim's sociological enterprise is the theory of the social determination of knowledge. This theory precisely says that every knowledge is socially determined; a person's thought is socially located, or is a function of the social position. Mental activities such as knowing, thinking, conceiving etc. do not have an autonomous realm of their own as they are fundamentally dependent on the practical, social life situations of the knowing (thinking, conceiving) subject. The process of knowledge does not develop in accordance with the immanent laws; it does not follow from the pure logical possibilities¹. In other words, the activity of knowing does not take place in an abstract plane depending on its own internal laws, but in a concrete realm, i.e., the realm of

the practical life process of the knowing subject.

The practical, social, life situations, according to Mannheim, are 'the existential factors', which not only influence but "determine the scope and the intensity of our experience and observation..."² Man can never be a pure, isolated being. His very subjectivity is embedded in a life situation in a particular social structure. This life situation penetrates into his mental world and determines the very model of mental activities, the mode of perception or the mode of thought. So, all mental activities of human subject are determined by the factors external to the realm of thought, i.e, in Mannheim's terminology, by the extra theoretical factors.

An individual can think only in a certain way in which he is 'compelled' to think by his life situations a particular social structure. This is to say that the life situations generate a thought model which determines the modality of one's thinking process. Every one has this implicit 'thought model' before he proceeds to think or to understand something. He can not go beyond this 'thought model'. In other words, he is bound to think in accordance with it. This leads Mannheim to the rejection of the claim of absolutism in theory of knowledge, or positively, to the relativist thesis that every knowledge is necessarily relative.

Mannheim locates the 'thought model' within the system of beliefs of the social groups³ to which the individuals belong. An individual who belongs to a specific social group will have a particular 'thought model', a particular mode of perception, which represents the belief-system of the group. Social groups differ from one another in terms of their respective belief systems. Consequently, individuals differ in their perspectives depending on their respective memberships in various social groups. Every perspective is relative, since everybody belongs to a social group and has a thought model which reflects the belief system of his group.

Ideas, modes of thought and behaviors of the individuals who belong to the same group are moulded by their common social location. The crucial feature of common location is that it limits the range of experience open to an individual. It excludes certain possibilities, and also encourages the formation of certain definite modes of behaviour and thought.⁴ For example, certain individuals who belong to the social group of capitalists believe in justice as long as it is not detrimental to their economic interests. Their common location 'compels' them

to exclude some of the aspects of the concept of justice and to follow a mode of approach and behavior which suit their interests. Labourers mode of approach regarding the concept of justice would be different from that of the capitalist, precisely because their 'place' in the social whole is different from that of the capitalist. Both the capitalist's and the labourer's mode of thought is biased towards the interest of their respective social positions. They perceive the reality in different angles, from different perspectives. They cannot go beyond these perspectives, and therefore, their knowledge is limited to these perspectives. There is nothing called absolute knowledge other than different perspectives, since everybody in a social whole assumes a particular 'position', belongs to a particular social group.

A question still remains, namely, what kind of relation exists between belief and social group? The theory of the sociological relationship of thought and social group would be inadequate if it does not attempt to provide a sufficient account of the mechanism involved in such a relation. Mannheim is not explicit in providing such a theoretical account, but his theory implicitly contains the assumption of an interest-mechanism, i.e. the interest-relation between the belief-system and the social group. The question, namely why a social group should adopt one set of beliefs rather than another can be answered from a Mannheimian point of view by arguing that there is a interest- mechanism involved in a group's adoption of a particular belief- system. Every social group has certain interests which determine the conditions of its existence. These interests compel the members of the group to adopt a particular belief-system suitable to them. For example, the capitalist class has the interest of extracting profit from the production process, the profit-motive, without which it can not exist as a social group. The profit motive compels the members of the capitalist social group to adopt a particular mode of thought which serves and justifies the conditions of existence of their group. Therefore, what is expressed at the fundamental level of all the perspectives of a capitalist is his group-interest. A mode of thought, Mannheim assumes, consists of a basic interest which represents the basic assumptions share by all who belong to a specific social group. In other words, all modes of thought consist of a group-interest. Every knowledge is biased towards the group-interest of the knower.

Ideology, in Mannheim's system, refers to the knowledge mediated by the group-interest of the knower. Every knowledge is mediated and therefore,

is ideological. Subject perceives the object through the categories which are biased towards the interest of its social position; its mode of perception is conditioned by its group-interest. There is no knowledge which is free from ideology, since there cannot be a subject detached from social existence. The extreme relativist thesis which obviously follows from this position is that there can never be an absolute criteria for determining the truth and falsity of knowledge. To be sure, Mannheim's thesis that every knowledge is mediated by the group interest of the knower provides the methodological ground for the sociologist attack on absolutism in theory of knowledge. In other words, Mannheim's scheme constitutes the epistemological thrust of sociologist in general which consists in deabsolutising knowledge.

The Interest mediation-thesis has conventionally been understood as a Marxist thesis; it has its roots in a particular framework of interpretation of Marx's theory of ideology. We call this framework of interpretation 'materialist' for the reason that it depends primarily on the crude assumption that ideas are ultimately reducible to matter. Let us see, in the next section, how the above discussed sociologist view of ideology is closely related to, or even based on, the materialist interpretation of Marx's conception of ideology.

Sociologism and the Materialist Interpretation of Ideology

Every attempt towards a materialistic reading of Marx's theory of ideology starts with the formula from the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of political economy* : "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness"⁵. It is often suggested that the term 'social being' refers to the conditions of existence of man in the society, i.e, the social conditions of man's existence. Again, the term 'conditions of existence' refers to the basic features of the mode in which men exist or the way in which people earn their living. The mode of existence of men is embedded in a specific type of social relation. In other words, to be engaged in a specific form of economic activity is to be involved in a specific type of social relation. An agricultural labourer earns his living through a specific form of activity; the fundamental characteristics of this specific form of activity form his social conditions of existence. By this he is also involved in a specific type of social relation, that

he is related to his fellow labourers, to his masters and to the wider society in a specific manner. To be a labourer is to be related to others in a specific, socially determined manner. This is to say that the conditions of existence of a labourer is defined by a specific type of social relationship.

Every man in a social totality is engaged in a specific form of activity by which he earns a living; he is involved in a specific type of social relation. This involvement determines the quality and the content of his life. In other words, the manner in which man earns his livelihood determines his all other activities, his mode of life in general. The activities such as thinking, knowing, conceiving etc. are conditioned by his involvement in the economic process, in the 'mode of production of material life' Consciousness in general, therefore, is determined by the material conditions of man's existence.

Men, engaged in a common manner of earning a living, involved commonly in a particular type of relationship, have common interests, belief-systems and ways of thinking. They share in common their conditions of existence, and are related to and affected by the rest of society in a similar manner. Their common interests and experiences tend to generate a shared sense of identity, i.e., the class identity⁶. For example, men engaged in the specific activity of producing food in a feudal system belong to a social class, because they have a common manner of earning a living, a common type of social relationship, and therefore a common way of living and thinking. They share in common their material conditions of existence, and thus their modes of life in general. Their consciousness is determined by their membership in the class, i.e., by their common location in the economic structure of the society.

The relationship between class and consciousness, assumed here, is explicitly a causal one. To say that social class determines consciousness is to say that there is a kind of causal relationship between social class and consciousness, that, consciousness is causally determined by social class. This is precisely to say that consciousness is an 'effect', social class being the source, that given the cause one can assume the effect. The effect does not have either primacy or autonomy. It is not 'real in itself', but is determined by the 'real'. Consciousness belongs to a secondary realm; it does not have autonomy in so far as it is determined by social class. Ideas do not have any original content; they are mere reflections of the interests of the social class. They are passive

and do not cause changes in the material conditions of man's existence, the material conditions cause changes in ideas. This lead the conventional Marxists to believe that ideas do not have any active role in history, since they are mere by-products of material, social conditions, and also to hold the crude materialist view that the non-economic activities of man and the forms of consciousness corresponding to them (in short, culture) are absolutely determined by the economic base-structure of the society.

When it is assumed that men who share their conditions of existence have common interests and belief-systems, it is also assumed that consciousness of those men is shaped, conditioned, or determined by their common interests, i.e., the class-interests. The notion of class-interest is central to the deterministic interpretations of Marxism. Consciousness shaped by the class-interests is necessarily 'partial'; it is 'false consciousness'. It cannot be true in the sense that its scope of representation is limited, that it cannot represent reality impartially. It is always representation in a specific perspective i.e., the perspective of particular class. Every perspective is limited in scope. "Since it is already committed and predisposed to certain assumptions, the validity of which it takes for granted, its perception of the whole is filtered through them, and is inherently biased",⁷.

Biased representation, as it is often pointed out, involves distortion. That is, to represent reality in a biased point of view is to distort reality. Distortion has often been interpreted as a mechanism of misperception. Distorting something, in this sense, is misperceiving certain aspects of it which are contradictory to the class-interest of the perceiver. Marx's discussion on the liberal ideology of the capitalist social class has often been suggested as the example. Capitalists believe in liberal ideology, in the idea of freedom, because the bourgeoisie mode of production required that man should be free to sell their labour and to buy the goods, and therefore, they should be defined as 'free citizens'. The meaning of freedom, for them, is restricted to this aspect; it does not go beyond this, to the other aspect of the concept of freedom in which men should also be free from exploitation, that they have the right to earn sufficient money out of the labour they sell. Capitalist concept of freedom, therefore, is a distorted concept, that it misperceives certain aspects of the reality that do not

serve their class-interest.

Ideology, in the conventional Marxist sense, refers to the biased perspective. It is knowledge biased towards the class-interest of the knower. Every knowledge is ideological, since everybody belongs to a particular social class and has class-interest. Needless to say that this position comes close to the sociologist view, which we discussed earlier, that every knowledge presupposes a specific thought-model which is biased towards the group-interest of the knower. The concept of class-determination of materialist Marxism gets replaced by the concept of group-determination in Mannheim's scheme. By this replacement, Mannheim does not deny the class-factor in the determination of knowledge. All that he does is to consider class as one among the social groups, to introduce a general term which comprehends all the social factors including the class-factor in the determination of knowledge and thereby to provide a wider framework for the theory of social determination of knowledge. Evidently, the idea of class-determination is included in the theory of social determination as one of the aspects of it. Marx's theory of knowledge, thus, is conceived to be a part of the sociology of knowledge. Even, it can be claimed in view of the above discussion that the materialist interpretation of ideology or the theory of class-determination of knowledge provides the methodological ground for sociologism.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, we call the sociological model which is methodologically grounded on materialist model, as materialist-sociological model. In the next part, first (in Section 1) we focus our attention on the epistemological presuppositions of this model. Then (in Section 2) we attempt to have a brief exposition of the assumptions behind Marx's concept of praxis with the intention to show that how they radically differ from those of materialist-sociological model.

Praxis Vs Materialist-Sociological Model

Section I :

The materialist-sociologist theory of ideology (here after MSTI) clearly implies the following epistemological claims

1. Knowledge is subject's representation of reality.
2. Every knowledge is mediated by the social position of the subject.
3. Knowledge, mediated by the social position of the knower, can never be the true representation; it must be biased, distorted and therefore, ideological.

Representation is a category which necessarily entails the epistemological duality between the knower and the known, one who represents and the thing represented. The knower experiences 'the world outside' through his senses. He pictures the world through the senses. This process of picturing is the process of knowing. Experience is the primary mode of knowledge. But, as the second of the above mentioned claims suggests, the experience is not a direct, unmediated encounter between the subject and the object. By assuming a slightly different epistemological position from that of empiricism, MSTI advances the idea that the perceiver imposes certain categories upon the external world, the categories which are implicit in him before he proceeds to perceive. What generates these categories is the social position of the perceiver. Knowledge, therefore, is the experience mediated by the social position of the knower.

When it is assumed that knowledge is mediated by the social position, class/group position of the knower, then the 'objective truth' is an impossibility. All knowledge is perspectival. There are only relative truths, no absolute truth. Perspectival thought is ideology. Theory of knowledge cannot be distinguished from theory of ideology, since every knowledge is perspectival and thus is ideological.

Three tendencies can be plainly observed in the above mode of analysis;

1. crude empiricist, 2. Materialist reductionist, and 3. relativist.
1. It is perhaps slightly unfair to say that certain empiricist tendencies can be observed in a system which is claimed to be oriented towards rationalism. Sociologism, especially of Mannheim, as we have seen earlier, takes the rationalistic turn with the assumption that there is a thought- model implicit in every individual before he proceeds to perceive the world. But the tendency of a naive variety of empiricism that we perceive is at a more fundamental level of the sociologist system, i.e., at the level where it conceives knowledge as belonging to the realm of

passive representation, where it devalues the importance of thought by considering it as the passive reflection. The thought-model which determines the content of perception, or the categories that the subject imposes upon the object of perception, according to MSTI, are not the properties of the autonomous realm of mind; they are generated by the objective social structure. In short, the objective structure determines the mode of perception, the content of knowledge of every knower. In conventional Marxism it is the economic structure which determines the class-position, the point of perception and thus the content of knowledge of the subject. Knowledge, therefore is always the representation determined by an independent structure, a pre-existing reality. It can not have either primacy or autonomy. Thought can never be active, in so far as it belongs to the realm of reflection determined by the real. It is the 'effect' of the objective social structure, a 'constituted' category, and can never be constitutive or creative. The obvious outcome of this is the crude materialist thesis that man is merely the product of the social structure, by no means the producer of it.

2. Reductionist tendency is explicit in the sociologicistic mode of analysis of ideology. Ideology, in MSTI, as we have discussed earlier is a form of 'false' experience, distorted representation. False, because it is determined by the position of the subject in the reality. 'Position' is the creation of the objective structure of the reality. More clearly, reality created the position from which the experience (false) is generated. Reality, therefore, is the primary determinant of experience and therefore, of ideology. It is the 'truth' of ideology, because it determines ideology⁸. Going to the truth is looking at the reality. The form of experience of the capitalist, for example, is shaped by his social position, the capitalist social structure which defines his 'place' in it. To go to the truth of his ideology is to look at his social position, to reduce it to the objective social conditions which generate it. The mode of analysis, here is undoubtedly reductionist; it consists in reducing the subjective into the objective, ideas into the material ground.
3. It is beyond dispute that the theory of social determination of knowledge involves relativism, that the idea that all knowledge is mediated by the social position of the knower and is necessarily partial implies the thesis

that every knowledge is relative. This is to say that there are no objective criteria which would enable us to determine the truth and falsity of different knowledge. To reject the claim of absolutism is to accept the relativist claim. Again, to accept the relativist claim that every knowledge is relative is to refute the absolute validity of the claim itself; therefore, relativism is self-refutative.

Section II :

Do the above mentioned tendencies appear in Marx? Not with much difficulty it can be shown that in early Marx they do not. And, by assuming that early Marx does not stand isolated from later Marx, that, the early works provide the philosophical foundation for the later works of Marx, it can be said that the entire theoretical system represented by Marxism is free from such tendencies. Our objective here is to show that how, by considering some of the crucial philosophical concepts employed mainly in Marx's early works, one can interpret Marxism as a system devoid of the tendencies of reductionism, empiricism, and relativism.

It has been well pointed out that the philosophical system of early Marx contains a Hegelian mode of theorising which is undoubtedly anti-positivistic. The perspective that Marx holds regarding the concepts of man, essence, creativity, freedom etc. a stand diametrically opposed to the assumptions of the positivistic interpretation. We here use the term praxis to represent the non-positivist philosophical perspectives which are expressed mainly in Marx's early works such as 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' and 'Theses on Feuerbach'.

Man, according to Marx, is a being of praxis. He distinguishes himself from other animals through the activity of production. The activity of production is the activity of shaping the nature according to the human needs; it is the humanisation of nature. By shaping the objective nature, Marx says, man shapes himself; that, production is both creative and self - creative. Precisely, the essence of Marx's conception of praxis lies in his thesis that man is both creative and self - creative.

Basing on the above brief account which precisely shows the real nature of Marx's concept of praxis we shall make the following claims and then proceed to the clarification of them.

1. Marx's scheme of praxis rejects the conception of the primacy of the objective domain and thereby stands against the methodology of materialist reductionism.
2. Marx perceives man as a being of praxis and thereby attacks the methodological ground of sociological relativism.
3. Concept of praxis refuses to accept the 'reflection' theory of knowledge and thereby discards the possibility of empiricism.
1. The Essence of Marx's conception of praxis, as we said, is the idea that man is a creative being, not a passive natural being. Reality, viewed from the perspective of the philosophy of praxis, is not a objective category; it is human reality "not in the sense that man exists with nature but in the sense that man shapes nature"⁹. This idea, obviously, has two aspects: a) The so called objective reality is the product of man, the property of human praxis. b) Man is not a being determined or produced by a pre-existing objective reality. Presently, we restrict ourselves to the discussion of the first aspect, because the second aspect would be taken up in the last part, in our discussion of Marx's methodological rejection of empiricism.

The whole of Marx's critique of the materialist idea of the primacy of objective domain is implied in "Theses on Feuerbach". The very first theses of the essay says that the chief defect of materialism is "that the object, reality, what we apprehend through our senses, is understood only in the form of object or *contemplation*; but not as *sensuous human activity as practice*; not subjectively"¹⁰. To conceive reality in the form of 'object' is to assert that there is something independent of man or the human sensuous activity, objectively real which can only be reflected or represented in human mind through a passive process. This is precisely to say that reality is an autonomous category. What Marx suggests in opposition to the materialist approach is that reality is to be understood as 'practice', to put it in more clear terms, the property of human praxis.

To understand reality as the property of praxis, not as an object 'out there', is to destruct, on the one hand, the autonomy and, on the other, the primacy of the so called objective reality.

It is quite evident here that Marx's alternative to the materialist approach suggests a redefinition of the concept of objectivity. The methodological ground for such a redefinition has been provided by him in 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' (here after EPM). The central concern of this work, as it has been commonly described, is the construction of a philosophical theory of labour basing on a 'historicist' view of nature, i.e., the view that nature for man is not the objective reality, but essentially the human reality. Labour, as it is conceived in EPM is not merely an economic activity; it is the existential activity of man. Man exists primarily by producing things. The activity of production is the activity of transforming nature into the means of man's subsistence; it is the humanisation of the nature. Nature, therefore cannot be conceived as an objective category unaffected by the historical praxis of man. On the contrary, it is to be understood essentially as historical, the property of human praxis. Explicitly, this historicist conception of reality fundamentally rejects the materialist hypothesis of an independent, objective domain, the reductionist claim that everything subjective can be ultimately reduced to an objective ground. Marx's method, therefore, is basically different from that of materialist reductionism.

2. The sociological relativist thesis that every knowledge is mediated by the social position of the knower and therefore is relative is methodologically founded upon the materialist conviction that the human subject is the product of the objective social reality, that everything subjective is causally determined by the outer reality. The supposition here is that society is an objective circumstance, the determinant base; when the circumstances change the subject changes in accordance with it. Marx attacks the very basis of this supposition by arguing that the change in the social circumstances is not to be understood in terms of an objective process unaffected by man, it is man who causes changes in the circumstances. He says: "The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of (men's) circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator himself must

be educated",¹¹. The suggestion here is that materialism fails to grasp the human essence behind the social changes; it denies the fact that human praxis is the source of history. This denial leads the materialists to the reductionist thesis that man is merely the product of an objective process called history.

It is to be noted here that Marx's assertion that human praxis is the source of the historical process does not in any way imply that subject is unaffected by the process. It is true that the basic thrust of Marx's argument is against the reduction of subjectivity to the level of an effect, the relativisation of thought. But, it does not go to the extreme of assigning an a historical status to the subjective domain. Marx clearly maintains that praxis implies the shaping of both the objective and the subjective domains, that in the process of production man 'produces' himself. The act of shaping reality shapes man himself. In the process of changing the circumstances man changes himself. Man creates history and history creates man. Marx says : The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self - change can be comprehended and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice",¹².

Marx stresses the necessity for a new approach, a revolutionary approach which accounts the creative and the self- creative aspects of human praxis and thereby conceives reality as a total process implying a constant interaction between subject and object. Explicitly, the relation between subject and object according to such an approach is not that of a one-sided determination in which the former is always determined by the latter, but that of a dialectical interaction where neither of them has an historical status, a separate existence apart from the process.

But, man is the effect of a process which is initiated by himself. "He contemplates himself in a world that he has created",¹³. It can very well be derived from this that there is a definite space for the conception of the autonomy of the subjective domain within the theoretical framework of Marxism. Subject is autonomous in so far as it is not the effect of something other than its own activity. Human activity is free in the sense in which it is determined, not by an objective nature 'out there', but only

by history which is nothing but the process of human development through praxis. Precisely, this is what Marx means when he describes man as a free being, human life activity as a free conscious activity¹⁴. Marx's concept of praxis, in this sense signifies the essence of man implying Freedom, consciousness and creativity.

3. The theory that reduces all thought to the level of manifestation of social substratum which is objectively real implies the classical empiricist distinction between the receptive subjectivity and the autonomous objectivity. We have seen that the idea of the autonomy of the objective domain clearly disappears in Marx's redefined scheme. We shall argue here that to reject the autonomy of the objective domain is to attack the reflection theory of knowledge. Marx's redefinition of objectivity, as we saw, establishes the conceptual primacy of the human agency, that it establishes the view that human praxis is the source of the social substratum, of the so called objective domain. When it is assumed that human praxis is conceptually prior to the objective reality, then it is also assumed that all that is *humane* are not to be conceived as belonging to a secondary realm; rather they constitute the primary realm. Consciousness viewed as the essential aspect of human praxis, then does not belong to the epiphenomenal realm, to the realm of reflection.

The view that consciousness is an essential aspect of human praxis needs to be elaborated. It is clearly implied in Marx's economic and philosophical writings, especially in his conception of human labour as exposed mainly in EPM, the idea that consciousness is not to be understood in isolation from praxis, the actual life process of man. "Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence"¹⁵. To understand the actual life process of man apart from consciousness, Marx assumes, is to reduce human existence to the level of a passive natural being. What distinguishes man from a mere natural being, according to Marx, is the activity of production, i.e., the conscious activity of transforming the objective nature into the means of his subsistence. It is the fundamental life activity of man. Animals, Marx says, do not involve in the activity of production consciously. Their life-activity is just mechanical. They are immediately one with their life activity. They do not distinguish themselves from it. Man, on the other hand, as we

discussed earlier, makes his life activity itself into an object of his will and of his consciousness; he has conscious life activity. This conscious life activity distinguishes man directly from the life activity of the animal.

The thesis that follows from the above is that consciousness is an inseparable aspect of human praxis. It becomes clear here that the statement, 'social being determines consciousness', understood in a crude deterministic sense, stands against this thesis. The term 'social being', viewed as an objective ground, does not involve the meaning of the conscious life activity of man; it refers to a category of being which is conceptually separated from, prior to the category of consciousness. Such a dualistic idea clearly disappears in Marx's formulation. The category of consciousness, as we saw, in Marx's account can never be different from the category of social being. Man, for Marx, is a conscious, creative being, a being of praxis. Consciousness separated from praxis is necessarily passive; it can never be creative. Human consciousness presupposes creativity, and creativity presupposes consciousness. Man produces consciously. "His creation, in practice of an *objective world*... is the proof that man is a conscious species-being",¹⁶.

Marx's concept of consciousness, therefore, has to be viewed in a fundamentally different way from that of sociologist. Thought, in Marx's scheme, is not the passive reflection of a preexisting reality; it is an inseparable aspect of praxis, a fundamental aspect of the activity of shaping the reality. Knowing is not to be understood as merely an activity of representing the reality, but as an inseparable part of the activity of shaping the reality. In other words, the activity of knowing cannot be divorced from the activity of transforming the reality. Reflection/representation theory of knowledge is inadequate, if not false; it totally fails to account for the creative content of thought and to perceive man as a creative being.

The true nature of Marx's objection to the representational theory of knowledge can be better illustrated by bringing out the essentialism/anti-positivist presuppositions of both the ninth and the tenth theses of "Theses on Feurebach". In the ninth thesis Marx's says "The highest point attained by contemplative materialism, i.e., by that

materialism which does not comprehend sensuousness as practical activity, is the contemplation of separate individuals and of civil society."¹⁷ That is, the theory which presupposes a representational concept of knowledge, which perceives knowledge as a passive process of representation, not as an aspect of human praxis, is 'contemplative'. It understands reality only in the form of an 'independent object'; it fails to comprehend the constitutive essence of the reality, i.e., the human praxis.

In other words, it conceives reality only as an 'object' devoid of any human content. To refute the constitutive essence behind the facts is to refute the universality, and thereby to accept the absolute reality of the particulars. A theory which does not attempt to go beyond the appearance or which perceives the observable forms as the facts devoid of any content, therefore, implies the empiricist-positivist paradigm of knowledge i.e., the paradigm which restricts knowledge to the representation of the discrete particulars (or which conceives knowledge as the 'contemplation of separate individuals').

The term 'civil society' in the sense in which it is used in the thesis mentioned above, refers to a society where men are divided into separate individuals alien to each other; it refers to a system of alienation. In Marx's account, in a system of alienation men get alienated from their species-life, from their social essence, and turn to be divided into separate, isolated individuals. The picture of civil society, therefore, is the picture of separate individuals. That is, the spirit of positivism is exemplified in the form of life of the civil society.

Obviously, by disagreeing with that variety of materialism which culminates in the conception of civil society, Marx disagrees with positivism in general where knowledge is simply a representation of discrete particulars. This becomes more clear when we go through the discussion in 'On Jewish Question'¹⁸, where Marx brings out and criticizes the formalistic/positivistic character of the fundamental concepts which form the basis of civil society. Individual in a civil society, Marx observes, is a self-sufficient monad withdrawn to himself and separated from the community. All the basic concepts of civil society such as

liberty, equality etc. are defined in such a way that they provide the secure ground for the separation of man from man. For example, the concept of liberty as it is used in a civil society, denotes the right to do anything which does not harm others. The limits within which each individual can move without harming others are determined by law. Therefore, liberty, in a civil society is that of man as isolated monad withdrawn into himself. Concept of liberty, Marx says, thus is based not on the association of man and man but rather, on the separation of man from man. Similarly, the concept of equality refers to the right to be equally considered in front of law. Marx observes that it simply means equal access to liberty, that each man is equally considered to be a self sufficient monad. Again, Man's right to private property is the right to enjoy one's property, to dispose over it arbitrarily according to one's will, without considering other men, independent of society. Obviously, it is a right of self-interest. It is the right of every individual to be an isolated monad. Thus, all the concepts which provide the ideological ground for civil society are the concepts of individualism. Individualism, in its most usual sense, is a mode of approach which presupposes the idea of separate individuals. In other words, the paradigm that is implied in every individualist approach is that of positivism, i.e., the paradigm which stands for 'the contemplation of separate individuals'.

To be precise, the idea of civil society is the idea of separate individuals. The highest point attained by materialism is the idea of separate individuals. Dialectical theory, assuming a method which does not restrict itself to the domain of given facts, evidently discards this crude variety of materialism. In other words, Marx's scheme implying a dialectical paradigm which by its nature goes beyond the domain of given facts to the domain of the historical constitution of the facts, (beyond appearance to essence) stands in direct contrast to the conventional materialism. It rather speaks for a kind of essentialism of a Hegelian variety where what is given is not 'the real' but only the manifestation of the underlying reality. The stand point of this kind of essentialism is not the civil society, the system of alienated individuals but surely a society where individuals are not alienated from each other, a 'human society'. Marx makes the idea explicit in the following thesis : "The stand-point of the old type of

materialism is civil society, the stand point of new materialism is human society or social humanity”,¹⁹

It follows from the above that the representational concept of knowledge, or the empiricist conception where knowledge is equated to the perception of discrete particulars is not merely different from but also contrary to Marx's epistemological position. As many non-positivist interpreters of Marxism point out Marx advocates a critical rationalist position according to which a true epistemological discourse maintains a conceptual separation between true knowledge and false knowledge (ideology), between critical and uncritical paradigms of rationality. True knowledge implies the paradigm of critical rationality, i.e., the paradigm which penetrates the 'givenness' of the facts, to the historical content of the facts. False knowledge implies the paradigm of uncritical rationality which, by its nature, is incapable to go beyond the appearance, to transcend the immediacy of the facts²⁰. Positivism implies the paradigm of uncritical; rationality, a mode of thought that results in "concealing the the aproiri constitution of the facts",²¹; so, it stands for false knowledge. As it has been rightly commended by the thinkers of Frankfurt school, especially by Herbert Marcuse, Marxism is to be viewed basically as critique of uncritical rationality, thus, of positivism. To be precise, it is not merely the case that Marx's epistemological concepts are to be undertood in a non- positivist angle but, more importantly, they are to be viewed as providing the secure methodological ground for a critique of positivism.

To sum up, it can be very well said that the Marx's epistemological scheme can never be accomodated within the methodological framework of positivism. The conceptual system that Marx develops basing on his philosophy of praxis is immune to positivism, to the reductionistic, the relativistic and the empiricistic tendencies of positivism. In short, Marx's philosophy of praxis does not leave any space for determinism; rather it stands contrary to the positivistic mode of theorising. To characterise Marxism as a deterministic theory is to reject the revolutionary content of Marx's concept of man as a being of praxis, a being who shapes the reality.

NOTES

- * The central theme of this paper has been taken from the thesis entitled "Knowledge and Ideology : Towards a Non- Positivist Reconstruction of the Epistemological Scheme of Marxism" submitted by me to the Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I am grateful to Dr. Amitabha Dasgupta, my research supervisor, for his help in formulating the ideas discussed in this paper.
1. Mannheim, Karl : *Ideology and Utopia*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1936, P. 240.
 2. *Ibid*, p. 240.
 3. Abercrombie, while commenting on Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, defines social group as a social category whose unity is constituted by a similarity of location of a number of individuals within a social whole. cf. Abercrombie, Nicholas : *Class, Structure and Knowledge*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, p. 38.
 4. *Ibid*, p. 38.
 5. Marx, Karl : *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in K. Marx and F. Engels *Selected Books*, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970, p. 117.
 6. Cf. Parekh, Bhikhu : *Marx's Theory of Ideology*, Ajantha, New Delhi, 1982, p. 25.
 7. *Ibid*, p. 27.
 8. Cf. Hirst, pual : *On Law and Ideology*, The MacMillan Press, London, 1979, p. 24.
 9. Avinery, Sholmo : *Social and Political Thought*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 71.
 10. Marx, Karl : 'Theses on Feuerbach' in *Portable Karl Marx*, Penuin, New York 1983, p. 155.
 11. *Ibid*, p. 156.
 12. *Ibid*, p. 156.
 13. Marx, Karl : 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 140.

14. *Ibid.* p. 139.
15. Marx, Karl and Engels, Frderich : 'German ideology', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 169.
16. Marx, Karl : 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 139.
17. Marx, Karl : 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 157.
18. Marx, Karl : 'On Jewish Question', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 24.
19. Marx, Karl : 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Portable Karl Marx*, p. 168.
20. Cf. Lukacs, George : 'What is Orthodox Marxism?' in *History and Class Consciousness*, (Trans. By Rodney Livingston), The MIT press, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 6-7.
21. Cf. Habermas, Jurgen : *Knowledge and Human Interests*, (Trans. by J. J. Shapiro), Heinemann, London, 1972.

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