LUCIEN GOLDMANN
IS THERE A MARXIST SOCIOLOGY?
Translated and Introduced by Ian Birchall

When Lucien Goldmann’s essay ‘Is There a Marxist Sociology?’ first appeared in Les Temps Modernes in 1957, it made an immediate contribution to the revival of a serious and
consideration of the Marxist method. The scientific
deformation of Marxism, emanating from Moscow, was beginning
to wear thin, and had been proving an ideal Aunt Sally for a
horde of hack scholars determined to 'refute' Marxism. At
the same time, in both Eastern and Western Europe, various
versions of 'ethical' and 'humanistic' Marxists were being
developed by those who wanted to break with the brutalities
of the Stalin era without having to find a scientific
explanation of why they happened. Goldmann's stresses on
the concept of 'totality' as central to dialectical thinking cuts
through the false dichotomies of fact and value, science and
ethics, ends and means, etc.

Goldmann, whose premature death at the age of fifty-seven
in 1970 was a serious loss to Marxist scholarship, will be
remembered for two things. Firstly, he played a major part in
reviving the early literary and philosophical works of the
Hungarian Marxist George Lukács - The Soul and the Form,
The Theory of the Novel, and History and Class Consciousness -
which had been suppressed by the Stalinist bureaucracy, and
renounced by Lukács himself.

Secondly, in his major literary studies, Goldmann made
a positive and original application of Lukács’ method, which in
Lukács' early works often suffers from extreme obscurity of
expression. Goldmann takes from Lukács a fundamental
concept with the unity of form and content, insisting on taking
the work as a totality, and not making a surgical extraction of
the socially relevant, like so many practitioners of the
'sociology of literature'.

Moreover, since Goldmann’s active political commitment
was limited to taking stands on particular issues, he did not
suffer from inhibitions of the later Lukács, and was able to
make useful interventions in such 'modernist' literary trends as
the French nouveau roman.

Goldmann’s Philosophy and Human Sciences is still a
valuable counter-manual for anyone exposed to bourgeois
social science. Yet Goldmann, for all his concern with
'totality', does not follow Lukács in what was the fundamental
proposition of History and Class Consciousness: 'For when
confronted with the overwhelming resources of knowledge, culture
and routine which the bourgeoisie undoubtedly possesses and
will continue to possess as long as it remains the ruling
class, the only effective superiority of the proletariat, its
capacity to disprove the bourgeoisie is the discovery and
justification in its own terms of comprehensiveness',
that makes much of Goldmann’s writing, especially the essays
posthumously collected in Marxisme and Sciences Humaines
(Gallimard, 1970), so disappointingly reformist and complacent.
In the last resort his Marxism is a brilliant tool for inter-
preting the world, but not for changing it.

Ian H. Birchall
December 1971

In a recent book Mr. Maximilien Rubel puts forward the
thesis that in Marx’s work there is a duality between an
objective and 'scientific' 'sociology' on the one hand and a
revolutionary ethic on the other.

The problem of the existence of a Marxist 'ethic' and a
Marxist 'sociology', or, in more general terms the problems of the
relation between judgments of fact and judgments of value,
in dialectical thought in general, and in Marx's work in
particular, is far from being a new one. It was the object of
a long and searching discussion in Marxist theory between the
years 1904 and 1930; a discussion involving the principal
theoreticians of the various tendencies, notably Karl Kautsky, Karl
Kautsky, Max Adler, Karl Kautsky, and Kar

2. Karl Kautsky (1854-1912); great French mathematician, who in later years turned to philosophy of science.

Notes followed by the indication (LG) are Goldmann's original
notes; the others have been added by the translator.

1. Maximilien Rubel: Karl Marx. Essai de biographie
intelleutuelle, Paris, Marcel Riviere, 1955. (LG)
2. Karl Kautsky (1854-1912); great French mathematician, who in later years turned to philosophy of science.
"In the indicative mood," which was objective and foreign to any value judgment, but obviously Marx's work contained something quite different from a collection of 'political recipes' conceived on the model of technology. One need only read on to find oneself confronted with a selfsame humanism, conferring value on man, which the 'orthodox' positions found it difficult to account for, at least on the theoretical level. It was therefore easy to foresee the imminent appearance of a neo-Kantian interpretation of Marxism. And it came - after Cohen,9 NatorplO and other academic neo-Kantians had taken up a position on the mixture of science and ethics,21 Vorlander himself had a rapid success. Soon he was able to publish a pamphlet against the 'orthodox' positions. Kautsky, on the other hand, was one of the rare rigorous determinists (we must remember that Marx was not a determinist - see in particular the Third Thesis on Feuerbach, quoted below); as a result, they were particularly defence less against the attack. The theoretical affirmations of socialists are not based, we told, on ideas invoked or discovered by some thinker who wants to impose the world, but simply the general expression of real social relations, of a class struggle which really exists. Not only his polemic against Proudhon, but also a note in Capital, is ironic at the expense of the idea of eternal justice," and any reader of Capital or the other great fundamental theoretical work of scientific socialism, Engels' Anti-Dühring, knows without conscious deliberation they had excluded ethical points of view from their deductions.

"How can we explain this curious repulsion against ethical idealism, from which socialism in fact draws its greatest strength? Well, it can easily be understood from the historical and psychological point of view,..."

And after having analysed these historical and psychological reasons (hostility to the speculative idealism of Kant, Fichte and Hegel, the struggle against 'true socialism,'11 etc), Vorlander continues.

9. Herman Cohen (1842-1918); German neo-Kantian philosopher, founder of the 'Marburg' school; his pupils were among the revisionist wing of social-democracy.

10. Paul Natorp (1854-1924); German neo-Kantian philosopher.

11. 'True Socialism;' prevalent among German petty-bourgeois literati before 1848; of Communist Manifesto III 1-e, etc.

'And yet nonetheless a deeper ethical thought was implicit in this very complex hostility to ethics and idealism. Socialism cannot feel itself from ethics historically or logically, neither on the one hand as merely inspired by an insidious hostility to any 'ethical' socialism, nor on the other as an avowedly ethical movement, to which the foundations of their socialism were deliberately - please excuse the dishonesty and impudence - stripped of all ethical form. The Communist Manifesto openly declares, for example, that laws, morality and religion are merely bourgeois prejudices, and which are hidden behind bourgeois interests. The theoretical affirmations of socialists are not based, we told, on ideas invoked or discovered by some thinker who wants to impose the world, but simply the general expression of real social relations, of a class struggle which really exists. Not only his polemic against Proudhon, but also a note in Capital, is ironic at the expense of the idea of eternal justice," and any reader of Capital or the other great fundamental theoretical work of scientific socialism, Engels' Anti-Dühring, knows without conscious deliberation they had excluded ethical points of view from their deductions.

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'The philosophical pivot of his text is the sentence in which, speaking of the organic world, he writes:

'If we consider the organic world, it presents above all one characteristic in opposition to the inorganic world - finality.' (p 45)

In reality, this highly questionable synthesis of Marxism and Darwinism, which met the most serious reservations from other Marxist theoreticians, did not give Kautsky any superiority at all in face of the neo-Kantian arguments. An objective science, whether determinist or finalist, allows no conclusions in the imperative. The argument of Poincare, which
already existed when Vorlander began to formulate his criticism, remained inevitable. The fact that historical evolution in no way provides an obligation for any particular person to accelerate that evolution, or even merely to approve it. Thus it is no surprise that at the end of Kautsky's pamphlet we find a passage which in fact reaches the same position as Vorlander: "Nor can the social-democratic organisation of the proletariat, in its class struggle, do without the moral and ethical indignation against exploitation and class oppression. But this ideal has nothing to do with scientific socialism, the scientific study of the laws of evolution of the social organism in order to know the trends and the necessary ends of the proletarian class struggle. It is true that in the case of a socialist, the thinker is also a militant, and no man can be artificially divided into two parts of which one has nothing to do with the other. But sometimes even in Marx's scientific research we perceive a moral ideal. But he always, correctly, tried to exclude it as far as possible. For in science, the moral idea becomes a source of errors, if it attempts to prescribe the ends of science." (p 141).

Of course this is an isolated passage in a text directed entirely against Vorlander. Nevertheless, Vorlander and Kautsky were certainly sincere in his convictions. It is none the less true that by recognising the existence of a 'confusion' between ethical judgments and judgments of fact in Marx, Vorlander is even by admitting that this confusion was inevitable for any socialist militant, he implicitly recognised the superiority, at least the independent left-wing, of the Ethical Kantian positions on the essential point of the debate.

We should, however, add that this theoretical superiority of the ethical positions of Vorlander over the scientism of Kautsky and Plekhanov has only nowadays become apparent. At the time the two positions very rapidly became the philosophical expressions of two ideological and political currents, in the following way:

Explicit reformism was for a long time to base itself, and to some extent still bases itself, on an ethical socialism, although for some time it has usually abandoned any attempt to give a philosophical foundation to its politics, and in particular to relate it in any way to Marx's thought.

Inversely, scientific and anti-ethical 'Marxism' - the conception of socialist politics as a social technique founded on an objective science was for a very long time the philosophical basis of the apparently revolutionary but in fact reformist attitude of the orthodox, or 'centrist' wing of the parties of the Second International; moreover, in our own day, it has been taken up, on a much lower theoretical level, by the apparently revolutionary but in fact defensive and conservative tendency of Stalinism.

If in between these two positions and their respective theoreticians, there was in Marxist thought during the period 1904-1939 a third position, to which the current known on the theoretical level as Austro-Marxism, and on the political level under the highly expressive nick-name of the Two-and-a-Half International, this movement could be compared - making all necessary reservations, and stressing that this comparison is formulated here only to assist the understanding of the contemporary reader to the present day independent left, embracing under this title the whole range from L'Observateur to L'Express and from Les Temps Modernes to L'Esprit - with however, the difference, due to a set of particular circumstances which we cannot elaborate, that this movement became in one country, Austria, the ideology of a significant part of the working class, a fact expressed by the existence of the Austrian Socialist Party and the particular place taken up by it within the Second International. From the intellectual point of view, what concerns us here is the fact that Austro-Marxism produced a whole group of theoreticians who were among the most brilliant socialist thinkers up to the second world war, notably the economist Rudolf Hilferding,16 author of Finance Capital and Minister of Finance in the Austrian Republic after the last war, the militant and theoretical Otto Bauer,17 and finally the philosopher Julius Knauss.18

The last named, a writer and thinker of the highest level, devoted an important part of his work to the problems of the relations between the thought of Kant and Marx, and left numerous books, which by their form as well as their content, exercised a wide influence on several generations of young socialists in Central Europe.

In comparison with the positions of Vorlander, Kautsky and Plekhanov, we could characterise Max Adler's thought as a position of synthesis, adding however that it was much more coherent than theirs. Like all of them, he believed in the radical separation between judgments of fact and judgments of value. Together with Vorlander and various other ethical socialists, he admitted the existence of a relationship between the thought of Kant and that of Marx, and also the fact that in the individual minds of militants, socialism takes on the aspect of an ethical value; like Plekhanov but unlike Kautsky, he rejected any final ends in social and historical life, and compared Marx's philosophical positions to those of Spinoza; like Plekhanov, Kautsky and the 'orthodox Marxists,' he categorically rejected any ethical foundation to socialism.

Adler thus came to an original conclusion, and, it must be admitted, one which was the most satisfactory for all those elaborated on the basis of a separation between theory and practice, between judgments of fact and judgments of value.

For him, and this is one of his principal ideas, Marx was a sociologist and, moreover, founder of sociology; Marx's work was above all a sociological work.

'According to the Marxist conception, socialism will be achieved, not because it is justified from an ethical point of view, but because it will be the result of a causal process. The fact that the product of causality is also justified from an ethical point of view is in no way secondary, and for a Marxist is not an accident. But this correspondence of the causal necessities of evolution with the ethical justification is a sociological problem. Within Marxist thought this problem can be resolved only in a causal manner.' Following R. Cohen, a large number of thinkers - I would particularly name with the utmost respect, Max Adler - have found the connection between Marx and Kant in the idea that socialism must be accompanied by an ethical justification of its ends such as is given in the practical philosophy of Kant.

'Such a fashion of establishing the agreement must, however, be energetically repudiated, and precisely from a Marxist point of view. It is not a question of sociological knowledge. It bases socialism on the causal knowledge of the processes of social life. Marxism and sociological determinism (Max Adler: Kant and Marxism, Berlin, p.14). It is Marx, and not, as is usually believed, Auguste Comte, who is the true founder of sociology. 'While the development of Comte's positivism was

14. The two are not identical, but the independent left-wing socialism indicated - in common language and by a more or less legitimate extension of the term - by the name Two-and-a-Half International found an important theoretical expression only in Austro-Marxism. The term itself had first of all been used to refer to the Union of Socialist Parties for International Action, founded in Vienna after the first World War. (Ed)

15. L'Observateur (later France-Observer, Nouvel Observateur), weekly run by Gilles Martinet and Claude Bourseul - PSU orientation; L'Express, weekly, editor J-J Servan-Schreiber; increasingly less influential since Time in style; Les Temps Modernes, political and literary review, directed by Sartre; L'Esprit, review, founded 1932 by Emmanuel Mounier. An English parallel would be: from the New Statesman to New Left Review.


17. Karl Renner (1870-1950); of the Austro-Marxists the most sympathetic to gradualism.

18. Otto Bauer (1881-1938); Austrian Foreign Minister 1918-1919, exiled 1934; see also T. Clifford, 'The End of Deutscher's Road,' TS 15.

19. Admittedly Hilferding and Renner ended up by integrating themselves with the reformist state bureaucracy, whereas Bauer and, above all, Adler stuck to the original positions of Austro-Marxism. But here too we must beware of over-simplification. Right up to the end, we can recognise in Hilferding and Renner their Austro-Marxist origins. A serious study of reformist thought in German social-democracy before the First World War would probably come to distinguish several groups of theoreticians - among them the former Austro-Marxists, the former 'centrists,' the new bureaucracy, and the 'rarely-integrated into the party' socialist intellectuals (Vorlander, Bernstein, etc.), who are, in reality, bourgeois liberals led by their convictions to turn to socialism. (Id)

20. Rudolf Stammel (1856-1938); German neo-Kantian philosopher and jurist.

21. F. Staudinger; neo-Kantian philosopher, writing in Germany in the 1890s.
more or less contemporary with that of Marx's thought, with Comte, sociology remained a programme rather than a fully elaborated science. Comte held that history affects us through the idea of a positive conception of the spiritual life of humanity, that is, through the idea that by causal laws the world goes on developing, just as for a long time it has been admitted we can grasp physical nature. But beyond this methodological point, implying nothing to do with the realisation of this programme, and his practical attitude never went beyond a mere glorification of the latter, we reject any positivist project in modern German philosophy. In comparison we can see the superiority of his position in comparison to those already developed by other Marxist thinkers.

In comparison with Vorlander, Adler remained within the limits of orthodoxy, rejecting any attempt to complement Marx's thought with that of any other philosopher, notably Kant, as he was, without any attempt to revise his - the culminaton of an evolution inaugurated by Kantian philosophy. In comparison with the latter, he rejected any mixture of Marxism and Marxism, preserving the purely historical and social character of the latter, while refusing, like Kautsky and Marx himself, any attempt to found position on ethical values, and moreover, apparently taking a more orthodox position than Kautsky, for he rejected any kind of finalism.

In comparison with Plekhanov, who at this time, together with Kautsky, was recognised as the principal theoretician of orthodox Marxism, Max Adler seemed to accept in a rigorous manner the comparison, upheld by the latter, between Spinoza and Marxism, and like him rejected any idea of finality; nonetheless, he had a better understanding of ethical reality, for, he explained, social determinism was operative precisely through collective consciousness, which alone transforms biological realities into social facts, and for the individual, took on the aspect of will and the ethical norm.

It is understandable that Kautsky and Plekhanov remained, for many years for most Militants, the great 'orthodox' theoreticians, that was no attempt to complement Marx's thought with that of any other philosopher, notably Kant; but on the other hand, Max Adler's theory seemed to offer a much simpler solution to the problems themselves, and who more or less clearly perceived the inextricable difficulties of the orthodox positions in face of the offensive of neo-Kantian socialism.

We can also appreciate the authority enjoyed by Max Adler, and the growing influence of his thought on young socialist intellectuals.

To sum up, what characterises these three fundamental positions (despite their differences, we are classing together Kautsky and Plekhanov) is that they all hold that Marxism implies an objective science distinct and separable from any value judgment, what might be called, to use Poincare's terminology, a 'science in the indicative mood.' On this point, the different trends of Marxism still affect us through the idea of a positive conception of the scientific which characterised academic thought at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, by the very fact diverging from the objectification of the objective in the classical German thought of Kant, Hegel and Marx. The differences between these three positions consist in the fact that Vorlander, and with him a large number of thinkers who explicitly reformism, affirm correctly with Poincare, that from a science in the indicative mood one can never derive any conclusion in the imperative mood, and thus there could be no 'scientific socialism,' since any taking up of a socialist position necessarily has an ethical basis. This position very rapidly became the ideological reference of the trend consisting primarily of some bourgeois democrats brought to socialism by taking seriously the demand for individual freedom for all men.

The 'orthodox' positions (Plekhanov, Kautsky, etc, up to the modern Stalinists) categorically oppose any attempt to give socialism an ethical foundation, for to them it seems a kind of reactionary deception and phraseology; in this, they continue the attitude already adopted by Marx and Engels and Marxists.

To the ethical conceptions of the reformists, they oppose a political conception of historical action, which comprehends this latter as a sort of social technique; in them, one clearly realising that no practical attitude, whether political or ethical, can be derived from a science in the indicative mood. Such a science can only lead to ethical sciences, indicate the most effective means to achieve a certain end; it could never indicate the ends themselves. Basically - whether it is a question of a Darwinian conception implying a certain finalism, as in Kautsky, or of a Spinozan and rigorously determinist conceptions with Plekhanov, on the most important level these positions had, in fact, yielded ground before the neo-Kantian attacks, so that we have in Kautsky, who, in a more veiled way than in Vorlander, the affirmation quoted above, of the existence of confusion, of judgments of fact and judgments of value in Marx.

Taken up again in our day by the Stalinists, this position appears to us to develop among the bureaucratic machines of working-class parties every time that, in order to win the masses, these bureaucrats claim to be explicitly revolutionary, when in reality they no longer are. One might, with a certain lack of precision necessary in an article for a journal, characterize it as the conception of the 'managerial' sections in the working-class movement. We may add that this analysis comes from Marx himself when he expressed it in a famous text: the Third Thesis on Feuerbach.

Finally, the third position, that of Max Adler, very widespread in intellectual circles, and finding its political reality in the social-democratic left (Austro-Marxism and the journal Klassenkampf) (Carlo Cipolla) in Germany, however, he clearly realising that no practical attitude, whether political or ethical, can be derived from a science in the indicative mood. Such a science can only lead to ethical sciences, indicate the most effective means to achieve a certain end; it could never indicate the ends themselves. Basically - whether it is a question of a Darwinian conception implying a certain finalism, as in Kautsky, or of a Spinozan and rigorously determinist conceptions with Plekhanov, on the most important level these positions had, in fact, yielded ground before the neo-Kantian attacks, so that we have in Kautsky, who, in a more veiled way than in Vorlander, the affirmation quoted above, of the existence of confusion, of judgments of fact and judgments of value in Marx.

It was at this stage in the discussion that there appeared in 1925 the work by Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, which has since become a classic. This work, reverting to the dialectical tradition of Hegel and Marx, made a direct attack on the premises common to all the positions which we have listed, namely, the existence of an objective Marxist sociology and the legitimacy of a separation between judgments of fact and judgments of value. Lukacs showed that if one accepted the idea of an

22. 'The consciousness of ends now appears solely as a psychic form through which causality unfolds in a particular sphere of belief and as social being by its collective (gattungsmassig) consciousness. Thus the world as action - life and human action - is grasped in all its potent recognition to a mere semblance of liberty or diluted to the illusion of self-consciousness. It can be understood only as the opposite side of causal necessity, as something belongs to theoretical study and the side involving will to immediate concrete social life. The problem is, of course, how the combined consciousness is divided into this kind of thought, which, since Spinoza, tends more and more to a total expression, and for which Marx, after the enormous influence of the philosophical system by Hegel, sees his activity is divided into, first of all, the whole sphere of social life, with a rare force of social understanding, that we can resolve the fundamental problem of social life, which still creates difficulties even for modern thinkers, and sometimes leads them into error; the problem of the relations between individual liberty and historical necessity.' (N Adler, The Thought of Marx, Berlin, p 77.) (LG)

23. 'The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbrinthis and, that, therefore, changed men are products of other climes and upbringings, without being degraded to a mere semblance of liberty or diluted to the illusion of self-consciousness. This world as action - life and human action - is grasped in all its potent recognition to a mere semblance of liberty or diluted to the illusion of self-consciousness. It can be understood only as the opposite side of causal necessity, as something belongs to theoretical study and the side involving will to immediate concrete social life. The problem is, of course, how the combined consciousness is divided into this kind of thought, which, since Spinoza, tends more and more to a total expression, and for which Marx, after the enormous influence of the philosophical system by Hegel, sees his activity is divided into, first of all, the whole sphere of social life, with a rare force of social understanding, that we can resolve the fundamental problem of social life, which still creates difficulties even for modern thinkers, and sometimes leads them into error; the problem of the relations between individual liberty and historical necessity.' (N Adler, The Thought of Marx, Berlin, p 77.) (LG)

24. Lukacs, Histoire et Conscience de Classe, (French translation) Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1925. (Two extracts were published in English in IS 24 and 25.)
objective science in the indicative mood, action could no longer be conceived except in terms of ethics or social technology; conversely, if one began with a conception of historical action as individual action, one could conceive it only in ethical or technical terms, and sooner or later, if one developed one's thought consistently, one would arrive at the idea of an objective science of society. But it is precisely all these complementary concepts - sociology science of social life and social action - the form of projection which seemed to him questionable and above all undialectical.

For him, what characterises historical action, is precisely the fact that it is not carried out by isolated individuals, but by groups who simultaneously know and constitute history. Therefore neither the group nor the individual who is part of it can consider social and historical life from the outside, in an objective fashion. The knowledge of historical and social life is not science but consciousness; it must obviously strive towards the attainment of a rigorous and precision comparable to those achieved in an objective fashion in natural sciences, but in so doing it must separate itself from the natural science of facts and judgments of value, and, similarly, any separation of theory and practice is impossible in the process of understanding history; the very affirmation of such a separation will have an ideological and distorting effect. Historical knowledge is not a contemplative science; historical action is neither a scientific technique (Machiavellian) nor ethical action (Kant); the two constitute an indivisible whole which is a progressive awareness and the march of humanity towards freedom.

The ethical conceptions of socialism, moreover, lead to a liberal ideology which subordinates the end to the means, and the group to the individual; the conceptions of socialist action as social technology, conversely, subordinates the means to the end and the individual to the collective. The dialectical position of Lukács, however, is characterised by its refusal of any subordination, of means to ends or of ends to means, of groups to individuals or of individuals to groups, etc. Ends, means, groups, individuals, parties, masses, etc., are dialectical thought: the constituent elements of a dynamic totality, within which the greatest necessity is to combat, in every concrete situation, the concrete danger of the subordination of means to ends or of ends to means, of groups to individuals or of individuals to groups, etc.

This Lukácsian position restored to Marx's work its true internal coherence, and at one stroke got rid of all the so-called 'dualities,' 'confusions,' philosophical inadequacies, etc., and so it seems to us the only possible starting point for a real rebirth of dialectical thought in all its strength and fertility.

We have published several works inspired by this viewpoint and which elaborate on it; so we do not need to dwell on it further here, but simply refer the reader to these works.25

We need only mention in our view (and in this we go further than Lukács, who was content to show that a consistent dialectical thought must necessarily refuse, even on the individual level, any conception of individual action as ethical will or social technology), on the level of individual consciousness, what corresponds to the dialectical conception of history is the notion of faith, and, in particular, the act of faith in the form of the wager. The history of Lukács' book is well-known; it met the resistance of two bureaucracies - socialist and communist - and was suppressed only a few years after its appearance.

Soon after, the triumph of Stalinism was to put an end to this discussion about the existence of a Marxist 'ethics' or 'sociology' just as it stopped all the other great theoretical discussions which were the pride and the very life of Marxism. In fact, since about 1930, a great wave of obscurantism has continued to spread over the working-class movement; on the one hand, the Stalinists replaced living thought by a scholasticism limited to quotations from the 'masters' and a servile interpretation of them; on the other hand, in the reformist camp, there was a progressive abandonment of any attempt to connect in any way dialectical thought and Marx's work. It was on the one hand a few isolated thinkers here and there who, as for instance Vorlander and against the stream of history, tried to continue a tradition which social and political evolution seemed to be condemning to oblivion.

We now come to Mr Rubel's book, which we shall analyse only from the point of view of its key concept of a so-called duality between 'sociology' and 'ethics' in Karl Marx's work.

Mr. Rubel, who takes the credit for having raised this problem in France where most of the works we have just mentioned are almost entirely unknown - takes up both Vorlander's idea of an ethic which is supposed to be the basis of Marx's socialist ideal, and Max Adler's idea of the sociological character of Marxist thought. Moreover, he takes this position without any reference to the former discussion.26 and without telling us how he intends to reconcile these two ideas. In fact, it is, of course, not by chance that Vorlander and the neo-Kantians said so little about Marxist sociology, while Max Adler limited ethics to an individual perspective without any historical sociological meaning. The clearest case of the search for Marx both part of his theoretical construction, and of his scale of values, is the conflict between the two. England, in which case there remains for ethics only the sphere of individual consciousness which decides whether a life is a success or not. In the sociological sense, as Max Adler did - in which case there remains for ethics only the sphere of individual consciousness which decides whether a life is a success or not, without attempting to delineate the scope of either of them.

Moreover, he does not seem to have any very precise idea of the nature of the relations between 'ethics' and 'sociology' in Marx's work. In fact, not only does he never define what he means by these words,27 but, furthermore, he seems to oscillate on this point between at least three different positions:

(a) Ethics and sociology in Marx's work are two autonomous and complementary elements.

(b) They are implicitly and involuntarily confused (Vorlander's position).

(c) An original position developed by Mr. Rubel: Marx - for inexplicable reasons - is supposed to have created a conscious and deliberate confusion of these two heterogeneous elements.

We shall give our readers a single example of this perpetual oscillation. In the eight pages of the section entitled 'Sociology of Revolution,' in which Mr. Rubel, among many other things, approaches the key issue of the relations between the conditioning of men by the social environment, and the transformation of this environment by human activity - an insoluble problem for any determinist thought, and especially for sociological thought, as Marx himself stressed in the Third Thesis on Feuerbach - this 'deliberate confusion' (Goldmann's emphasis) of the two heterogeneous elements.

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There is thus supposed to be in Marx - and Mr. Rubel repeats it elsewhere - a conscious and deliberate confusion of two theoretically incompatible positions.

(b) Est two pages further on, Mr Rubel writes: Marx here envisages proletarian revolution

26, On Vorlander, Mr Rubel simply says, in a note intended to show the fragmentary nature of all biographies of Karl Marx before his own, that he 'analyses the philosophical scope of Marxist thought' (p 7); on Max Adler, in another note, that at the time of the discussion about State and Revolution 'while recognising the Marx of Lenin, [he] nonetheless criticised its blankitude' (p 415). (LG)

27, It is true that in another work (Pages choisies pour une ethnique socialiste, prefex, p xxv) Mr Rubel writes The Marxist ethic is characterised negatively by its amorality, and positively by its essentially pragmatic approach. It is difficult to know what this *amoral* ethic is; if we understand right, it is simply a question of opposing authentic whither to 'moralisant verite.' - what Vorlander called 'moralisant' - which is of course, evident but in no way affects the problem. (LG)
Let us note in passing the inexactness of a text which view (to be later formulated by Engels, 7 December 1867.) It would need all Mr Rubel's interpretation. Marx to Engels, known since the first publication of their correspondence. Here we are back at Vorlander's position: Marx thought of social life - whether, moreover, it be sociological or ethical postulates, this text, much earlier than Marx, 7 December 1867., admits: 'Let us add that this distinction is not, must recognise, explicitly established in Marx's work, but it emerges of itself. Certain that it derives from the whole career of one who was a partisan and a revolutionary,' (p 218)

(c): Finally, two pages further on, after a long quotation from the German Ideology, Mr Rubel concludes the section as follows:

'A harmonious blending of sociological theme and ethical postulate,' he regards them as neither serious nor valid, but amusing touch,' to trick an opponent. (Letter from Marx to Engels, known since the first publication of their correspondence)

'the scientific hypothesis and the ethical postulate, remarks that this text can be seen, when closely examined, as the recognition of a 'fundamental ambiguity in his theoretical approach' (pp 435-436). We can understand why he devotes to it the last section of his book, before the conclusion, under the title 'Ambiguity and Subjectivity.'

For Marx himself to affirm 'that his objective analysis refutes his own subjective fantasies,' that 'the way in which he presents himself, for himself or to others, the ultimate results of the present movement, of the present social process, has no connection with his real analysis,' would at the very least be a senselessness. (pp 435-436) We may add in passing that in a commentary - the whole book is more a surprising character of these lines for he immediately adds: 'Nonetheless, Marx blends with his analysis of a concrete situation a fundamental value judgment on the absurdity of a social order which makes possible, even inevitable, the religious alienation of man.' (p 96.)

This time, the blend is 'harmonious,' and there is no longer any confusion, voluntary or involuntary.

Here also, Mr Rubel, while permanently oscillating between three interpretations which are certainly not easy to reconcile, does not even seem to suspect the existence of a problem.

On this subject, we must also point out a really surprising discovery. For Mr. Rubel has found one single text in which Marx is supposed himself to affirm the existence of a fundamental duality and even a contradiction in his work. Here he sees the proof that Marx is 'deliberately confusing' (and he stresses 'we say indeed deliberately') the scientific hypothesis and the ethical postulate, remarks that this text can be seen, when closely examined, as the recognition of a 'fundamental ambiguity in his theoretical approach' (pp 435-436). We can understand why he devotes to it the last section of his book, before the conclusion, under the title 'Ambiguity and Subjectivity.'

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Admittedly Mr. Rubel himself seems to have been aware of the rather surprising character of these lines for he immediately adds: 'Nonetheless, Marx blends with his analysis of a concrete situation a fundamental value judgment on the absurdity of a social order which makes possible, even inevitable, the religious alienation of man.' (p 96.)

All this is clearly false and indefensible. Marx condems simultaneously the social order and the religion which is part of it. He does not 'blend' a judgment of value with an objective analysis, but, as throughout his work, makes a dialectical analysis in which understanding, explanation and evaluation are strictly inseparable.

At another point we learn (p 225, note), in the course of a discussion of a work by Duveau, that 'the dichotomy of social classes and the theme of social catastrophe' are not, as Sorel thought, ideological themes, but 'rather ethical themes.' Evolution to catastrophe and above all the dichotomy of social classes as ethical themes would be difficult, it seems, to follow along the road of confusion.

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grasp Marx's thought 'did not succeed in their intentions,' above all they never approached Marx oneself,' and deliberately 'isolated the economist, the philosopher, or the historian,' etc. Of course there is an element of truth in these remarks, since all scientific work is necessarily partial and needs to be complemented by the contribution of later researchers. But to our knowledge, no biography of Marx has previously developed the idea, a ridicu­lously one to say the least, of radically separating the study of his thought from that of his political action. An 'intellectual' biography which speaks of 'the deep root­ ed anarchism' of Marx (p. 85), of his 'anarchist profession of faith,' (p 146), etc, but contains no mention of his work, in theory and practice, against Bakunin; a biography in which Marx is attributed with an ethical conception of socialism, but does not even mention the conflict with the Ger­ man socialist leaders at the time of the Hochberg case, during which Marx and Engels resolutely took a principled position against any collaboration with those who based the study of the book, the study of the Abbott family, that I present in this article.

A glance at the Appendix to the chapter on the Abbots (pp.49-50 of the English edition) will show that many if not most of the statements made by the parents about the 'schizo­ phrenic' daughter, Maya, and by Maya about herself are factual statements. For example, Maya says that she worried over examinations; the parents contradict this: she did not worry. In general, both parties make claims to knowledge - the daughter about herself and the parents about their daughter - but claims which contradict each other.

Most of the argument which Laing and Esterton transcribe from interviews with Maya and her family and reproduce in the chapter on the Abbots is also about matters of fact. The dominant feature of these arguments is, in my reading, conflict rather than disagreement. In this conflict, the feature of the 'schizophrenic' daughter, as evidenced in her statements, which I wish to single out is her inability to state or, more radically, to know what is true and how we can only legitimately tell true from false. Despite the strange protest­ ations of Laing and Esterton in the Preface to the second edition, there is good evidence in the text for inferring that this failure to learn must be explained in a way which involves reference to the behaviour of the parents and not simply by invoking some (un­ disclosed) organic deficiency in the patient. Maya, in short, Maya does not learn because she is unable to and she is unable to partly because of the way her parents behave.

Consider the following passage from Laing and Esterton's commentary on this case:

"An idea of reference that she [the daughter 71] was imagining things to be going on between her parents. These open yet unveiled non-verbal exchanges between father and mother were in fact quite public and perfectly obvious. Much of what could be taken to be paranoid about her was, in fact, because of the first-person her own mistrust. She could not really believe that what she thought she saw going on was going on."

We could add, in dealing with Mr. Rubel's book, very many more criticisms of the same scope and kind. Obviously the dimensions of an article do not permit this.

Let us simply say that all this does not seem serious to us. Mr. Rubel has wasted a considerable effort in order to affirm, without proof, that Marx's thought is ambiguous, confused and contradictory, and in particular to write an 'intellectual biography' of Marx which scarcely touches on the real problems posed by a genetic study of Marxist thought. Doubtless he has read very many texts by Marx, but he did not possess the necessary philosophical, economic and political culture to bring to a successful conclusion the extremely complex and difficult task he had set himself. Furthermore, he never discusses the works already in existence on the subjects he treats, being satisfied with sometimes indicating their key ideas and passing value judgements on them (mostly negative) without taking them into account. (For example, the work of radical Marxists (of Marxists), which, however, he hardly ever tries to justify. By its dogmatism, its peremptory tone, the inadequacy of its conceptual equipment, Mr. Rubel's book is simply the other side of the coin to the Stalinist works of recent years. For, despite its opposite positions, it shows just the same faults as the latter.

Thus the radical critique of works of this kind is an indispensable condition for a real rebirth of Marxist thought and the development of the scientific 'Marxology' which Mr. Rubel, rightly, so keenly desires.

SANTITY, MADNESS AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

Trevor Pateman

The republication of R.D. Laing and A. Esterton's Sanity Madness and the Family as a paperback (Penguin Books, 1970) made me buy it and read it again. Despite myself, I re-read the book as a philosopher, but in the event this proved to be fruitful. As a philosopher's reading of the first edition, my study of the book, the study of the Abbott family, that I present in this article.

My reading of this runs as follows. We learn to 'tell right from wrong' mainly from our parents. They are our chief moral authorities, from whom we learn not simply a list of particular rights and wrongs, but general rules of right and wrong (ethical principles) and, importantly, criteria for telling right from wrong where no general rule obviously applies or where it is a case of making an exception to a general rule. Of course, all of this, no doubt, goes on unconsciously.

Though there is no common phrase like 'learning to tell right from wrong' to express it, I suggest that we also learn, mainly from our parents, how to tell true from false - veridical from delusive perceptions, correct from incorrect statements. Here again we learn not just lists; we also assimilate criteria: we acquire an unconscious mastery of the criteria and the ways of applying them which indicate to us when, for example, we can legitimately say 'I know . . .' and when we can only legitimately say 'I believe . . .': when we have a right to be sure, when not, and so on. In other words, parents are our epistemological authorities, that is, authorities on questions like: what can we know? How can we know? How can we know that we know? When can we claim to know? and so on.

Maga, like most children, regarded her parents as epistemo­ logical ('cognitive') would be a possible alternative) authorities. In her case, as in all of the cases studied by Laing and Esterton, the degree of reliance she had to place on her parents was increased by the closed nature of the Abbott family. In addition, these families were often very Christian and this could add another reinforcement to the reliance on parents. For rejection of the parents' epistemological authorities would be construed as a breach of the rule: Honour thy Father, and thy Mother. Maya's parents consistently deny the truth of her statements and thereby undermine any developing mastery of epistemological criteria and/or her perceptions themselves. She is thus dis­ abled from achieving a cognitive maturity of the world. The growth of cognitive autonomy is inhibited or destroyed - it depends when and for how long these interactions continue. In the case of Maya the analysis is complicated by the fact that she was away from home from the age of 8 to the age of 14. In the absence of a clear knowledge of what happened in that period, my formulations of necessity vacillate a little. She remains psychologically dependent on her parents, just as a child those parents treated all cases of morality/immorality as unique and therefore failed to transmit any means of discrimin-