

UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM

HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Brief theoretical comments on the "quest for materialist history":
concerning the article, "The object of African History: materialist
perspective". by H. Bernstein and J. Depelchin.

E. Wamba - dia - Wamba
Department of History

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"Marx's venture produces a new type of science in which a link between theory and practice must take place, not only for practice to be carried out according to theoretical analysis, but also for theory to arise from and be rooted in correct positions; a science in which the law of each **level** of social reality can fully explain only part of the reproduction of its conditions and never their replacement or transformation; a science in which a contradiction is never a negation or a logical impossibility, but a scale ranging from differences to various types of antagonisms; a science in which movements are not identical to the transformation of movements; the latter always implying not only the action of several levels of contradiction on one another, but also contradictions which themselves have arrived at determined stages of development (but no generalization can possibly be inferred from it due to the uniqueness of situations and the practical utilization of contradictions by political practice".¹ ".....but history is that original science which is possible as true science only on the basis of a correct political commitment, that is to say, that theory which must conceptualize the functioning principles of the diverse sectors of society dependent on the relationship between the real conditions of their production, their reproduction or their transformation conditions which exist only through political practice. It is in this sense, that history is a theory of a dialectic: it is linked to one sort of political practice and it leads to another;....."²

Professors Bernstein and Depelchin (BD, from now on) have written an important article which might become, probably the focus of important theoretical struggles around theories of society, with special reference to African societies, for some time to come. This is its greatest merit. While I agree with BD critique of the poverty of present African historical studies, some of the theoretical points they advance to support their remedy to the situation are puzzling to me. My brief comments, concentrated exclusively on their first and most theoretical part of the article, deal principally with those points. This part of the article provides us with a "theoretical space" through/in which the poverty of African historical studies emerges as poverty, and its problem posable. Yet, the conditions of production/emergence of this "space" (problematic) through which it needs to be grasped are not clearly explored. Can't "problematics" have history? How can otherwise, the motive force of the transformation of "problematics" be understood?

The article was written in 1977, a time when the criticism of early Althusserism - both from the point of view of revolutionary practice and that of marxist theory - was well developed.³ This criticism even forced some Althusserians to self-criticise themselves.⁴ A careful reading of BD article shows that they have not completely followed up with the theoretical and practical consequences of the criticism of Althusserism and the latter's own self-criticism. Or at least, they don't show why they feel that those criticism and self-criticism don't alter anything from the "correctness and sound-ness" of Althusserism whose formalist framework ("problematic") they closely follow in their article.

The process of knowledge production/development has always been understood by revolutionary materialists as governed by the contradictory unity practice/theory under the usual determination of practice - although under certain conditions⁵ under that of theory. This strategical primacy of practice, maintained by dialectical materialists,⁶ does in no way imply that 1) theory cannot become, in specific conjunctures, determinant (to maintain this is to fail to be dialectician) and that 2) practice can absolutely be separated from theory and vice-versa - whether practice is determined by theory or theory is determined by practice (to maintain this is to fall into idealism). Should we not grasp Althusserism as theory within the perspective of the development of the contradiction theory/practice (in its dual aspect of unity and struggle of contraries)? Its reproduction elsewhere (Africa) may imply a reproduction or a necessary convergence of its conditions of production.

By 1977, it became clear that the core of Althusser's idealism ("theoreticism") was his tendency to separate theory from practice in the analysis of the knowledge process with the use of his "theoretical practice". Althusser found it impossible to correctly articulate questions of science and ideology to questions of class struggles.⁷ While Marx subordinates his theory of science⁸ (and scientific development) in capitalist society under his theory of the capitalist appropriation of surplus-value, Althusser seeks some sort of a universalist non-class science. Althusser's theory of ideology⁹ was the "symptomatic" manifestation of that difficulty. Not only does he in that theory, conceive ideology exclusively from the point of view of a dominant ideology, he "develops the project of producing a general concept of ideology" conceived independently of its concrete content and therefore of its class nature". The function of ideology, "in general", is said to be to maintain individuals in their place in the relations of production - which is of course, a characteristic of the ideology of a dominant class. This "~~internal~~^{eternal} essence" of ideology is theorized through two basic assumptions: 1) a radical and ahistorical opposition between science and ideology and 2) the thesis of the permanence of the "ideological function in a class society as much as in a classless society". The functioning of ideology is "problematized", by Althusser on the basis of two theses: 1) ideology is the representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to social practices and 2) ideology summons or appeals to ("interpelle") individuals as subjects ("sujets") The relation between ideology and what Marx calls "forms of social consciousness"¹⁰ as well as the relation between ideology and "class consciousness" are blurred. Althusser, on the other hand, denies the fact that something which could say "it is us" can emerge on the material basis of social relations: he reduces the question of the subject or maker of history to an ideological question¹¹ and grasps the process of production of society with his ideology of the "process without subject".¹² Society is studied not from the point of view of class contradictions but from that of the articulation of instances.

The various polarizations which ED make, in their article, - such as "materialist theory vs. bourgeois theory", "scientific problematic" vs. "bourgeois problematic", "historical materialism" vs. "bourgeois social theory", "materialist history" vs. "ideological history", etc. - are of the Althusserian order of opposition science/ideology (equated with truth/falsehood). Conceived outside of the perspective of class contradictions, polarized terms refer to separate ontological

entities rather than first of all to different class perspectives in the struggles for the understanding of society. For, if "materialist problematic" and "bourgeois problematic" were not aiming at grasping the same object, why should materialists be concerned with the bourgeois non-object discourse? As Laclau has shown (Politics and Ideology in Marxist theory. NLB, 1977, pp. 59-71), indicating the differences between two opposite problematics is not proving that one is superior to the other. To do this one has to go beyond these differences to (1) establish a theoretical method of validation of the soundness of a problematic and (2) show that all the theoretical contradictions and inconsistencies of one problematic are effectively dealt with by the other problematic.

Moreover, BD talk about the "penetration of various elements of bourgeois social theory" in historical materialism (p.12) and see that J-C. Miller, whose theoretical work moves within an idealist problematic, is still producing sound knowledge (p.31) Does this not deny the sharp dichotomization science/ideology and the claim that correct method decides everything in scientific work? Needless to say that, outside of the perspective of class struggles in theory and theory in class struggle, it is difficult to understand this "penetration": how can a scientific study governed by a materialist problematic be penetrated by ideology (in the Althusserian sense of non-truth)? Althusser's answer, in line with his theory of ideology, would be that it is the fact of "human nature" i.e. the imaginary relationship of individuals to social practices- they cannot help it! This cannot, of course, be avoided when one is reasoning in the framework of the structuralist ideology of the "articulation of instances and levels of a social whole". According to this ideology, "marxist theory is not a dialectical theory of contradictions, but a theory of a social whole conceived as an articulation of instances, each being defined as such as a term of a combination".¹³

In a fine marxist piece of work,¹⁴ Badiou and Balme's have thoroughly exposed and analyzed Althusser's theory of ideology; there is no need for me to dwell on it. They have convincingly shown that ideology cannot be correctly understood outside of the perspective of the practice of ideological struggle; the marxist theory of ideology is a theory of ideological transformations and not that of ideological states. Ideology must be understood as a contradictory process and in its internal reference to real-so-cio-material transformations. The focal point of a marxist theory of ideology is a theory of ideological contradictions, a theory of the divided character of ideological representations.

It is from the point of view of the oppressed classes that one gets the experience of a divided ideology. "The dominant class practices and imposes its own ideology - expression of material relations of domination - as dominant ideology, it presents it as unique and unifying. It is the dominated classes which bring to the fore the mystification of the unifying ideology, on the basis of the class practices of rebellion irrepresentable in the dominant ideology."¹⁵ It is because there exists an irrepresentable practice in the dominant ideology (revolutionary class rebellion) that the latter is intelligible as representation. It is from the point of view of what falls outside of a dominant ideology that the latter is known in its dialectical particularity and its class foundation. In its collective newness, the non-representable produces the adequate re-presentations of all the fallacious representations: The ideological sphere is always a split sphere in which dominant ideology and dominated ideologies are in constant confrontation. Transformations of the dominant ideology are historically developed as theoretical responses to ideological resistance.

Moreover, the content of an ideology is never imaginary. The motive force of a thought is never intrinsic to thought itself. While the place of ideology is of the order of representations (it deals with intellectual "process" and "materials") its force is real, practical. Thought is the location of ideas and not the principle of their movement.

"The force of my ideas is what passes through me, it is what, par excellence, deploys the exteriority and the interpellation of history. Thought is without force. It is the place of passage and investment of massive energies of history. That is what ideology ignores, that is what whose spontaneous oblivion generates false consciousness. It does not absolutely follow that ideology is of the order of the closed sphere of imagination. It is the contrary; ideology is moved, through and through, by "real motive forces", and it is that reality which it disposes and reflects, even in the case of the element of a false consciousness. In other words: illusion is linked, not the ideas themselves, which cannot proceed from nothing else except reality, but to the representation of their autonomy. The ideological illusion is philosophical idealism: to assert the existence of an intrinsic force of thought, where

thought derives its force from material forces which prescribe its movement. It therefore follows that illusion and false consciousness concern the form of representation, not their content. It can be said that Althusser advances an ideological conception of ideology, ideological in the precise sense of the belief in the functional autonomy of ideas."¹⁶ ("La force de mes idées est ce qui me traverse, ce qui par excellence déploie l'extériorité et l'interpellation de l'histoire. La pensée est sans force. Elle est le lieu de passage et de placement des énergies massives de l'histoire. Voilà ce que l'idéologie méconnaît, voilà ce dont l'oubli spontané engendre la fausse conscience. Il ne s'ensuit nullement que l'idéologie soit de l'ordre de l'imaginaire fermé. C'est tout le contraire: l'idéologie est de part en part mise en mouvement par des "forces motrices réelles", et c'est cette réalité qu'elle dispose et reflète, ~~juste~~ ^{fait} ce dans l'élément de la fausse conscience. Autrement dit: l'illusion s'attache, non aux idées elles-mêmes, qui ne peuvent procéder de rien d'autre que du réel, mais à la représentation de leur autonomie. L'illusion idéologique, c'est l'idéalisme philosophique: affirmer l'existence d'une force intrinsèque de la pensée, la ~~see~~ ^{ou} la pensée se divise d'avec les forces matérielles qui lui prescrivent son mouvement. Il en résulte que l'illusion et la fausse conscience concernent la forme des représentations, non leur contenu..... On peut dire qu'Althusser met en avant une conception idéologique de l'idéologie, idéologique au sens précis de la croyance dans l'autonomie fonctionnelle des idées.").

Ideas denote practical and historical realities, class relations, and not imaginary relations; they, as far as their process of transformation is concerned, are governed by forces external to thought and not by the laws of the imaginary sphere ("les lois de l'imaginaire").

One of the consequences of the criticism of Althusserians is that the content of the relation between science and ideology (as well as that between materialism and idealism for that matter) cannot be understood outside of specific conjunctures of class struggle. We are dealing here with a complex contradictory relationship between processes

(i.e. science and ideology conceived as contradictory processes). The logic of places (distribution of places: dominant/dominated, whether places of concepts, instances or levels) cannot so easily be separated from the logic of forces (struggle, class contradictions provoking the displacement of places) without falling back into idealism. It is thus of no surprise to 'militant materialist' (Lenin) that the intensification of class struggles in theory (elaboration, production, propagation) and the efficacy of theory in class struggles is increasingly leading idealists to cover their theories with materialist clothes. This simple "materialist form" should not mislead one to think that these idealists have been converted to materialism or that the self-proclaimed materialists are always consistent materialists. But, on the other hand, if one cannot follow the variations of materialist forms, one may be still struggling against already "dead enemies".

What is materialism and what is a materialist point of view in African historical studies? ED seem to inscribe the real motive force of the crisis of African historiography - a particular case of the crisis of African studies and philosophy¹⁸ to its failure to adopt a "materialist problematic" ... in its methods. Althusserism, with its ahistorical ideology of reading Marx, tended also to attribute anything wrong in revolutionary movements to a bad reading of Marx.¹⁹

Materialism is first of all a critique of idealism.

As a critique of idealism in all its historical forms, materialism can only be grasped from the point of view of the struggle materialism/idealism as a reflection, in theoretical work, of class struggles. The theoretical sphere is always a divided/split sphere: dominant theories are at war with dominated ones; and each particular theoretical work reflects this struggle. The struggle is carried out through three main contexts: ontological/metaphysical, epistemological, and methodological. As is clear with the interchangeability of use, in revolutionary movements, of the concepts: world outlook, method and dialectics, those three contexts are closely interlinked. The first context involves questions concerning conceptions or theories of the world: "how does newness on novelty come into the world?" is a central question.²⁰ The second context deal with the appropriate ways of knowing the world and the last context deal with appropriate methods and procedures for studying appropriate objects. Marxism conceives those three contexts as being dialectically interlinked. This is clear in the five theses Mao gives in his essay, On Contradiction: 1) all reality is a process; 2) every

process is, in the last analysis, a system of contradictions; 3) in a process (i.e. a system of contradictions), there is always one contradiction which is principal; 4) each contradiction is dissymmetrical: one of the terms of the contradiction always dominates in the overall movement of the contradiction itself (theory of the principal aspect of the contradiction); 5) there exist different types of contradictions whose resolution requires different processes: the principal distinction to be made on this matter is that between antagonistic contradictions and non-antagonistic ones.²¹ These theses deal not only with ontological, epistemological problems but also with methodological ones. Of course, if one context is being emphasized, extra theoretical elaborations are done.²²

Since it is from the point of view of transformations (practice) that we gain correct knowledge,²³ the failure to start from the point of view of real transformations blocks the process of knowledge. Commitment to materialism is commitment to advance the process of knowledge i.e. commitment to real transformations, to practice and not to mere interpretations from the perspective of opposition to real transformations. (Dialectical materialism or materialism associated with dialectics means precisely commitment to real transformations of the real world.) This is clear in the six characteristics which Ruben²⁴ finds a marxist theory of knowledge to have; 1) it must be adequate to the real cognitive situation in which men find themselves; 2) it must be consistent with science; 3) it must conceive knowledge as being irreducibly social (instead of the asocial conception of the classical empiricists, Descartes, Kant, etc. centred on the question, 'What can I know?!' the logically prior point of departure for marxists is: "what can we know?"); 4) it must make of the social practice of man central; 5) it must be a dialectical theory; and 6) it must not necessarily accept the world as it appears, **but** permit access to the way the world essentially is. In fact, marxism not only grasps materialism from the perspective of the struggle materialism/idealism in theoretical work but most importantly from that of the articulation proletariat/materialism/science/revolution.²⁵ As we saw above, in relation to dominant ideology, oppression, domination and exploitation are major **obstacles** to knowledge process; only from the point of view of the complete liberation is such a process enhanced. It is in this sense that the proletariat represents the social basis which favours the advancement of knowledge process.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao Ze-dong, etc. have constantly insisted on the fact that materialism is based on a practice and a theory of concrete social relations, on class contradictions. It is "impossible to be right alone, and for oneself. One is right (correct) against reactionaries. One is always right against reactionaries, the 'against reactionaries' is an internal condition of truth."² To be materialist, it is indispensable to start, as of a principal determination, from concrete social relations between people and the reality of class struggles. That is what is strictly absent in Hegel, in all idealist philosophers and in all materialists before Marx. This is the substance of Marx's Theses on Feuerbach. The third Thesis reads: "The materialist doctrine (old materialism of Diderot-Feuerbach) concerning the changing of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator himself must be educated. This doctrine has therefore to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing (new materialism based not on naturalism but on historical perspective) can only be comprehended and rationally understood as revolutionary practice;" And the last thesis reads: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to change it". Marx's materialism insist on the study of the world from the point of view of practice, of its transformation.

BD summarize their understanding of the materialist epistemology this way: "Materialist epistemology is premised on the objective nature of the material and real world, prior to and independent of its appropriation in thought. The real cannot be appropriated in thought without the mediation of categories. The cognitive appropriation of the real world in scientific knowledge necessarily employs a methodology distinct from that which operates to produce practical knowledge derived from the daily experience of social life (knowledge that is practical in a social and ideological as well as a technical sense)." An attempt is being made here to get rid of social practice as the criterium for truth. The relationship between daily-life activities and science is left unclarified. The daily-life activities thus fall outside of the "proper object of science". The necessity of struggling against empiricism should not blind us to the possibility of

falling into natural materialism of Feuerbach.. The real task of marxist epistemology is to critically re-interpret even the epistemology of natural sciences from the point of view of historical materialism ("We know only of one single science, the science of history!" Marx/Engels in german Ideology) ^{*rather than} /to align historical materialism to the requirements of an epistemology based on natural sciences. ✓

For Marx, the essential independence of things, of nature, of reality ('object independence') from thought runs only in one direction, thought or "the thinking human beings" (Marx) are not essentially independent from reality. "Like Lenin, we uphold the essential independence of natural order. But that which is not essentially independent of man is precisely social being."²⁷ Especially when we are dealing with a theory of history i.e. a scientific study of what is essentially a form of social consciousness of social transformation, of how societies are produced and how they produce human beings, the specificity of Marx's materialism is crucial. "To understand the human world", wrote A. Sohn-Rethel, "Marx created historical materialism. The vital point for him in this respect was the realisation that 'it is men's social being that determines their consciousness' - their social being, not nature, not natural being. When a theorist of reflection speaks of 'nature', 'external nature' or man's own 'internal nature' he is animated by ideas already determined by his social being. His whole thought about reflective consciousness is an ideology of a particular social class and historical epoch"²⁸ Henri Wald, writing on the history of logic wrote:

8 "Logic and the history of logic have got a class character and are social sciences due to their gnoseological foundations. The materialist-dialectical interpretation of the laws of correct thinking proving, on the one hand, the objectivity of these laws - from the stand-point of materialism- and, on the other, the relative character of their validity - from the standpoint of dialectics - is what makes logic - the science of these laws - be social sciences and, consequently, assume a class character.

That is why the world outlook of the most advanced social class at a particular historical moment was always what enabled the elaboration of a rather scientific history of a social science. The view point of the revolutionary class in a particular historical age is the most scientific at that moment of history, since, even though itself relative, it is nevertheless the most objective, i.e. the most adequate to history, and, hence, it is also a step forward on the ladder leading incessantly to the absolute truth. Being the world outlook of the most revolutionary social class throughout history, dialectical materialism enables the elaboration of a rigorously scientific history of logic....."²⁹

BD, reasoning closely through Althusserism which failed³⁰ to establish the foundation of the theory (dialectical materialism) which defines the scientificity of historical materialism, seem to fall into natural materialism which Marx criticises in Feuerbach - as being incomplete. In fact, one of the forms taken by eurocentrism was precisely a natural materialist viewpoint: treating africans as natural objects. How can this viewpoint lead to scientific history?

It is interesting to see that BD do grasp the class character of bourgeois history' but they fail to indicate which class character a "materialist history" of Africa has. The contrast or opposition between materialist history and bourgeois history is indeed puzzling. Isn't there a bourgeois position in materialism? Is the opposition being made between a non-class theory and a class theory? What is being called for? A non-class history, i.e. a scientific history for everybody? Are BD trying to persuade ideologists (in African history) to abandon their class histories to come to everybody' non-class biased history? Isn't this a standpoint which conforms to the theory of the peaceful transition to socialism', which is based on the thesis of the inherently progressive and neutral character of science (productive forces)? BD seem to reduce the failure, by bourgeois historians, to take the perspective of the transformation

of the present society (capitalism) to a failure to perceive and use a 'scientific method'. Why don't ED see their intervention in class struggles around the social theory of the present (current) society (capitalism) - in its African expression - as a class intervention?

"The production of knowledge", ED wrote (p.11), "involves both epistemology and methodology united in the concept of problematic". Is this not an idealist position? This would be in agreement with Kant's epistemology based on the question, "How is objective knowledge of nature possible from sources other than manual labour?" Marx's problematic involved more than just the articulation of epistemology and methodology. It was from the standpoint of revolutionary practice of the transformation of the current society (capitalism) that he came to the position that the existence of natural laws was the theoretical expression in the bourgeois social theory of bourgeois commitment to the perpetuation of the current society. His critical analysis of the bourgeois dominant ideology (political economy) was possible only from the point of view of the dominated ideology of revolutionary class resistance. Failing to take this position, we cannot explain why did Marx see clearly through the limitations imposed by commodity fetishism. The rejection, by Marx, of the existence of natural laws governing social processes, is the foundation of Marx's epistemological break; he showed value to be a social relation. It is this rejection which is properly the location of the inversion, by Marx, of both Hegel and Ricardo. And such a rejection led Marx to the methodological task of grasping the specificity of the current society, i.e. its historical laws. It was, I think, this shift in Marx's world outlook, motivated by the practice of transformation of society represented by the persistently rebelling workers, which led Marx to a shift in epistemology and methodology and not the other way around.

Can a "materialist problematic" not based on the requirements of the practice of the transformation of the present african society - as an integral part of the present society (capitalism) - produce materialist history? Is it not the very conception of the social division of labour which produces departments of history etc. geared to the perpetuation of the present society?+ How can a theory developed from that stand point grasp historical laws?

Can these institutions and historians functioning there as concrete supports of class relations of the present society produce a pro-transformation of the present african society (thus materialist) history?

A whole tradition of philosophers of science, a' la Kuhn or 'a' la Bachelard, has confused the question of struggles in scientific experimentation often understood in subjectivist terms. Thomas Kuhn³¹ for example, fails to understand that the "dominant paradigm" - the so-called 'normal science' - exercises its domination on dominated paradigms which may not necessarily be ideological on which the struggle to overthrow or to replace the dominant paradigm may be rooted. It does require a lot of struggles for the dominant paradigm to be accepted socially as such. A simple exhibition of the problematic underlining such dominant paradigm is not enough. A history of science conceived through a succession of dominant paradigm rather than through struggles call them paradigmatic struggles - reflecting ultimately class struggles in scientific experimentation, is idealism. P Robert Foessart³² has shown that it is from the practical transformation of its object that a particular science develops. One of the reasons for the underdevelopment of the science of society is that social forces committed to the complete transformation of society are not yet sufficiently/mobilized. Only from the point of view of that practical transformation of its object (i.e. from the point of view of socialism) that the science of society will develop. The first phase of such a mobilisation gave rise to Marx, etc. Even in the area of natural sciences, the struggles for their development were fundamentally class struggles: it required sufficient mobilisation of the social forces, especially under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, favoring the development of science, as required by the bourgeois transformation of society, that sciences developed considerably. In fact, history emerged as a discipline, to provide for tthe theory of the bourgeois form of social consci-ousness of the bourgeois social transformation as well as domination: history was, for a long time, fundamentally the theory of the form of social consci-ousness of the bourgeois nation (its emergence, its development and its expansion)*.

Pion, who has studied the epistemological and political implications of the Theory of Games which was supposed to have brought a revolution in Economics,³³ showed that the main theoretical issue it was trying to resolve was to get rid, theoretically, of class struggle: it ended up

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with an imaginary policy. Examples need not be multiplied to show that theories necessarily have a social base, their production, reproduction and their disappearance cannot be understood without dealing with their social base. Which social bases in Africa does materialist history have?

A certain confusion on Marx's method still prevails. Marx has explicitly linked the question of his method to that of Hegel. He wrote:

"My dialectical method is in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which even he transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world (idealists always pose that the structure of thought when thinking must also be the structure of the world), and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of men and translated into forms of thought "The mystification which the dialectics suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell"³⁴

Marx views his method, not just as being in contradictory relationship with Hegel's, but also as a unity of contraries, method or mode of inquiry/ method or mode of presentation under the domination of the former. This is how he put it:

"Of course, the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyse its different forms of development and to track down their inner connection. Only after this work has been done can the real movement be appropriately presented. If this is done successfully, if the life of the subject matter is now reflected back in ideas, then it may appear as if we have before us an a priori-construction"³⁵

Granted: these formulations are very metaphorical'. But to just dismiss them on that account is not enough. Althusserians, I feel, have confused more the relationship Marx/Hegel by completely reducing it into an absolute discontinuity. Reading Marx, for them, became hunting for, anything Hegelian in his work and striking it out. Their theory of reading Marx, forgetting the test of practice, is fundamentally based on the hostility towards Hegel. Althusser goes even as far as censoring³⁶ the first chapter of Capital. If the demarcation line in Marx's work becomes Hegelian tendency vs. non-hegelian tendency, what about the struggle between materialism and idealism in Hegel's work - on which Lenin insists?³⁷ The cognitive topology of Hegel - for example - result of Hegel's epistemological critique of Kant, is still the basis of the distinction external/internal contradictions or extrinsic/intrinsic relations so important in dialectical and historical materialism. The failure to grasp what is materialist in Hegel's Science of Logic may explain Althusserians's tendency to fall back into natural materialism.³⁸

BD write on p1: "We attempt to show that method necessarily starts with the correct posing of questions, as well as bearing on their investigation. Moreover, we regard investigation and explanation as pre-eminently theoretical activities pursued within distinctive theoretical frameworks which determine the content and the use of empirical knowledge." Where do these questions which start the method come from? What determines the correctness of the "posing of questions"? Unless "theoretical frameworks" mean here "world outlooks", the position here asserted is completely idealist: the form of thought determines the content of knowledge. (The concept 'circle' not being circular, its content is not circular either!). And where does this 'empirical knowledge' come from - whose content and use are being determined by the form of thought?

The substance of the quotation could be expressed also in an old philosophical paradox: "to search, I must know what I am looking for otherwise //I do find it; but if I already know what// I won't recognize what I am looking for when I am looking for ~~then~~ I don't search for it". Theoretically, this issue in epistemology, has been dealt with through the relationship between theoretical concepts and 'observational concepts'.³⁹ The programme for getting rid of theoretical concepts in scientific research has not led to a definite convincing solution: theoretical concepts can not, it seems, completely be replaced by "observational concepts". The real problem here lies in the wrong

conception of epistemology which makes of perception rather than language its basis.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, if, in fact, "method necessarily starts with the correct posing of questions," then the correctness is defined or determined by a theory of the world to which the content of the thought refers. Only as an integral part of reality can we say that thought is in direct contact with reality. And in this case, the development of such a thought can only be studied as part of the development of reality. The objective content of thought refers to the content of the representation of reality and not to its form. That is why we don't talk about the content of reality in thought but simply the content of thought. The problem of empiricism and idealism has to do more with their theories of the world (the content of their representation of reality) rather than the form of their thought (method). But, of course, a theory of the world necessarily influences the method based on it. It is idealist however, to think that a World outlook is determined completely by a method rather than a practice.

Marx's method of presentation in Capital, as carefully explicated by G. Duménil,⁴¹ concerns the 'structure of the concept', in its interiority and exteriority aspects, which defines clearly the domain of the "theoretizable" ("theorisable") and its ultimate limits, the "non-theoretizable". Marx, in his method of presentation (i.e. the method of scientific explanation) uses a twofold instrument to study a phenomenon: an internal conceptual relationship and an external, contingent, non-theoretizable but effective relationship. This double relationship defines the conceptual structure through which the phenomenon is grasped.

The interiority/exteriority distinction has nothing to do with the usual empiricist/rationalist connotations. "Interiority" does not designate the essence in its opposition to appearances but the fact that determinations are internal to a concept or to a theoretical field. Marx retains, in Capital, only a concept or even a "phenomenal totality" taken into account, which may be inscribed in its interiority of the existing theoretical field, at a given moment of the exposition. Marx often, says of a determination excluded from the theoretical field: "it does not exist for us". This makes a demarcation of the theoretical interiority from its exteriority. This exteriority is not the "phenomenal appearance" of which the "interiority" would be the "internal essence", but another "logical totality". For example, exchange value or value belongs to the "fundamental theoretical field", while use-value (the "other face" of commodity)

necessary to conceptualize commodity, belongs to another, theoretical field (the one which studies physical and biological properties of utility products): each "logical totality" is thus autonomous. The chain of determinations (the structure of the concept) could be presented as follows:

<u>Internally to the concept</u>	↔	<u>externally to the concept</u>
value of commodity		concrete labor time
socially necessary time		external factors
the concept 'Capital'		
<u>internal determinations</u>	↔	<u>material or external de-</u>
variable capital		terminations
constant capital		subjective factors:
		labour power
		objective factors:
		means of production etc.

Thus, in Capital, Marx does not proceed by self-production of concepts (logic of iteration) as Hegel does but by positing of one concept, thereby opening the exploration (analysis) of the theoretical space opened up and closed up by such a concept, and by positing of a new concept (richer in theoretical determinations) broadening the theoretical field and so on up to the constitution of theoretical fields of an extreme structural complexity. This reminds one of the axiomatized⁴² presentation of logico-mathematical knowledge. It is this form of thought that BD are aiming at in their description of the formal arrangement of scientific concepts (mode of production, social formation, etc.) necessary for the presentation of materialist history. Although, the exteriority, non-theoretizable aspect is not understood correctly. BD chain of determinations would look like this:

production in general	↔	specific productions
mode of production	↔	socio-economic formation
Historical specificity I	↔	Historical specificity II
specific modes of production		Social formations with specific modes of production.
capitalist mode of production	↔	capitalist societies
		particular epochs, conjunctures

This is how BD put it:

"Our principal argument is that the production of knowledge (in the sense of the means and results of explanation) is always and necessarily a theoretical task, in which concepts at different levels of abstraction—to which particular functions correspond—are established and applied in the investigation of different objects of knowledge, at the level of Historical specificity I the theories of particular modes of production, at the level of Historical Specificity II the analysis of particular epochs, social formations, and conjunctures," (p.8).

As in formal sciences (Logic, Maths) where axiomatization hides the experimental side of Maths, Marx's method of presentation using "abstraction", hides also the experimental side of his scientific work. In mathematics, for example, "the full account of the historical development of each (theorem), the mistakes, errors, blind alleys, dead ends, contradictions encountered before its present formulation etc. is not given. The mode of scientific presentation tends to put emphasis on the absolute character of knowledge as opposed to its approximative character. In the hands of idealists, the whole mathematical apparatus is presented as if it were absolutely perfect and there were no problems, blind alleys, openended issues, etc. encountered on the process which led to the present formulation of mathematical theorems, postulates, and axioms. The experimental character - mostly grasped through the mode of investigation - which is the principal aspect of any science, is left in the background." One cannot really say that the motive force of development of mathematics is solely the axiomatic form of its presentation. The method of inquiry is here grasped through a materialist history of mathematics. It is also the experimental aspect of his work that Marx refers to as the dominant aspect of his method: the mode of inquiry. He is aware also that the mode of presentation, when successful, gives the impression to the scientific work of looking as if it were an a priori construction.

BD seem to reduce the whole process of knowledge production whose motive force is theory/practice to the mode of presentation. This is inevitable when one, like Althusserians, deduces Marx's method - through a "symptomatic reading" - from one of its best results (Capital). BD formal presentation of their "materialist problematic" seems to follow closely, without reaching its ultimate conclusions, Alain Badion's most rigorously developed - patterned after the logico - mathematical formalism - reformulation of early Althusserism.⁴³ One of the conclusion reached was that Althusser was unable to reconcile Spinozist tendency (theory of truth and model of structural causality) and Kantian tendency (relation abstract object/real object) in his problematic. Badion has since rejected this Althusserism as "epistemological idealism" whose main tenet is that "scientifically correct method (of presentation) decides everything in scientific work".

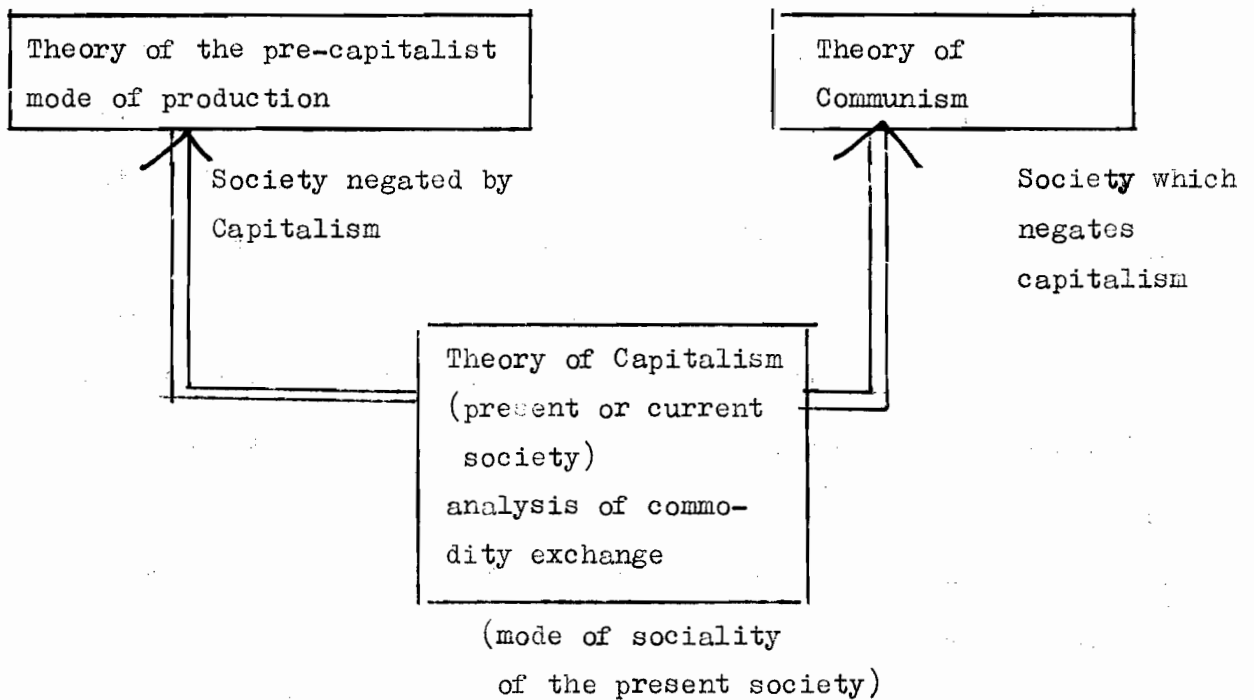
Althusserism was centered around the notion that dialectical materialism function ~~if~~ not as a meta-theory of historical materialism, at least a theoretical or conceptual policing apparatus, i.e. a theory of functions whose values are the proper domain of historical materialism. Or in other words, the process of production of a historical model could be assimilated to ^{a/}construction function of the concept (with reference to a logico-mathematical model: Syntax → semantics ⇒ Dialectical materialism → Historical Materialism)⁴⁴

BD seem to carry the same formalist conceptual arrangement over the conceptualization of the relation between a theory of modes of production - if the theory of 'production in general' is the domain of Dialectical materialism - and the theory of the specificity of a social formation. The question needs considerable elaboration; I cannot completely deal with it here satisfactorily⁴⁵ It is however, the theoretical location of disagreements and antagonism among marxists. It is because, within Marx's work itself, the relationship of the concepts in their arrangements is not absolutely determinate.

I argue, in line with G. Deleplace,⁴⁶ that the movement dialectical materialism → historical materialism → capitalism (i.e. theory of knowledge or method → theory of history → theory of a specific mode of production) in the way it is traditionally understood, cannot lead to the conceptualisation of the specificity of the present society (capitalism), which is the objective of Marx. If historical materialism as theory of modes of production - as it is usually said - provides laws of the type of the surface of a triangle ($\frac{1}{2}b \times h$), for example, the application of such laws to specific modes of production - as the application of $\frac{1}{2} (b \times h)$ to a specific triangle would not give us a specific picture of the mode other than a quantity. This is what people, like Endre Sik, did not understand. To deal with this difficulty, BD write (p.7): "The most important point here is that the production of knowledge at the level of Historical specificity II, just as in the case of Historical specificity I, involves the application of its own constitutive concepts. In other words, specific forms of theorization are appropriate to the investigation of concrete historical phenomena, in contrast to viewing such analysis as the effect of theory on data." This is precisely what must be elaborated; what is, in fact, the need for the concepts of HSI and what is their exact relationship with those of HSII? Doesn't this position contradict what BD said on page I that they were going to show?

Mao Ze-dong⁴⁷ conceives the relationship such as that between HSI and HSII in terms of the relationship between the universality and the specificity of contradictions. In contradictions, the universality exists only in the specific. No understanding of the universal aspect of contradictions is possible without a long investigation

and familiarity with the specific aspect. This would reverse the direction of the movement of the process of historical knowledge: HSII → HSI → Dialectical materialism. The status that Marx gives to class struggle in his theory of history and in line with Deleplace, I would argue that Marx's orientation in the process of production of historical knowledge (see annex I) is in agreement with Mao's position. The internal logic of such an orientation would look like this:



Thus, the theory of capitalism (the present society) is the only rigorous construction in Marx's theoretical work, on which an "historical" orientation could be based by negation. The conditions of the existence of the present society are discovered by asking: which society did the present society transform or negate? And the conditions of the complete transformation of the present society (capitalism) from within will give us the theory of the communist society. (Which conditions in the present society keep reproducing it and which ones are driving it towards its complete transformation?). The elements of the theory of the pre-capitalist society are only epistemologico - historical pre-suppositions of the current society; they are not supposed to be taken for a theory of the genealogy of capitalism. Ante-capitalist society is not the same thing as the pre-capitalist society. That is why, Marx places the section on

"primitive accumulation" where it is in Capital - after the theory of the commodity form. From a gnoseological point of view, there is no other way of 'reconstructing' the 'past' except from the point of view of the current society - especially if we take marx's conception that men are produced by society (i.e. a specific mode of sociality differentiates men) and that knowledge is necessarily social. The specificity of a social formation can only be understood through a discovery of the concrete form of sociality ("socialite") given by its mode of production - which governs the relations among people in that formation and produce and reproduce them as such. Marx's theory, in this perspective, would gravitate around the following questions: what are the conditions for the current society to be understood as a specific mode of sociality? These are: 1) the present society is seen as a mode of production of individuals, i.e. a mode of differentiation of men/women; 2) the present society is historically determined, i.e. its mode of differentiation of people is specific. It is only in this way that capitalism may cease to be taken as a particular case of mode of production, i.e. an application of a general theory of combination of the elements of a mode of production. To produce a theory of history, in the current situation, is to produce a theory of capitalism (the present society). There is no longer any "a priori direction of history" governed by a succession of modes of production.

OK
Such a succession is, often, considered "natural" and thus the tendency, for people who see it that way, towards falling back into "natural materialism". They see it, today, as "unnatural" to have a socialist society become again capitalist. Theoretically, natural materialism is the root of the philosophical aspect of revisionism. Communism, among other things, is conceived as the "natural" outcome of the "naturally progressive development of the productive forces". If historical materialism becomes a theory of general laws of the succession of modes of production of human development, we are back into a philosophy of history.

In addition to what has been said, all the theoretizations on "transition" from one mode of production to the other are if not simple epistemologico - historical presupposition of the theory of the present society and its negation by another society, etc., then simple theoretical speculations.

There is only the current society and other societies (past or future) can only be reconstructed/constructed in thought by opposition to the present society. The overthrow (negation) of the present society (capitalism) is no longer conceived as being required by "the general movement of history as a whole": this is a possible consequence of the absence of natural or universal laws - especially if the analysis of the historical laws (its specificity) shows that these laws are tendentially leading society to self - destruction. It is entirely an outcome of class struggles within the socio-material conditions of the historical laws of the present society which define its currency. It is in this sense that class struggle is the motive force of history. The general theory of modes of production - as traditionally conceived - makes of class modes particular cases and thus the class character of a mode tends to be given a less central position.

Since history cannot be conceptualized but from the present (and not from any observation of the past - the observed 'past' can only be what is reproduced by the present society - its specific mode of sociality - its specific historical laws in the reproduction through other specific historical laws cease to be specific. Pour empiricists!), the specificity of another society (in the past or the future) can only be reconstructed or constructed by opposition to the present society. (One should think of 'ancestral worship, as a form of history producing). It is in that sense that notions used to study the past must be elaborated by contrast with the meaning in the present. This is what marx summarized in the famous saying: "The anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the monkey." The genealogical theory of man from the monkey is not gnoseologically sound. Marx elaborated his thought in the following manner:

"It would therefore be unfeasible and wrong to let the economic categories follow one another in the same sequence as that in which they were historically decisive. Their sequence is **determined** rather, by their relation to one another in modern bourgeois society, which is precisely the opposite of that which seems to be their natural order or which corresponds to historical development. The point is

not the historic position of the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society... Rather, their order within modern bourgeois society"⁴⁸

The orientation to follow is thus: 1) to analyse the present society (capitalism) and 2) to define a contrario another society, past (pre-capitalist society or mode of production) or future ("communism"). This implies that concepts of modes of production (in general) and history have to be considered in a very restrictive manner. History can only be conceived as the movement through which the present society emerged from the past - which appears to us as its opposite and whose future will break with the present - if the future is effectively the opposite of the current. Historical temporality is not the same thing as simple chronology. Marx summarized this view in ~~this way~~ in this way.⁴⁹

"The capitalist mode of appropriation, which springs from the capitalist mode of production, produces capitalist private property. This is the first negation of individual private property, as founded on the labour of its proprietor. But capitalist production begets, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation. This is the negation of the negation. It does not re-establish private property, but it does indeed establish individual property on the basis of the achievements of the capitalist era: namely co-operation and the possession in common of the land and the means of production produced by labour itself." This conception could be called "materialist history" - at least in Lenin's sense of 'militant materialism' - i.e. "critical history", very aware of the impossibility of bringing the past into the present in vivo or in vitro. G. Deb Deleplace puts it this way:

"And it is no longer an 'utopian' history which confronts capitalism to classless society...; if the analysis of the mode of socialisation of individuals permits to grasp the existence of classes in the past - from its existence in capitalism - the history thus reconstructed will be an history of exploitation, as it could be situated in relation to the present. The latter confronted with the past to better assert its specificity: this is the orientation of a 'critical'

history."⁵⁰ ("Etce n'est plus une histoire "utopique", quiconfronte le capitalisme a'des sociétés sans classes ...; si l'analyse du mode de socialisation des individus permet de comprendre l'existence des classes dans le passé - a'partir de son existence dans le capitalisme - l'histoire ainsi reconstruite sera une histoire de l'exploitation, telle qu'elle peut être située par rapport au présent. Le présent confronté au passé pour mieux affirmer sa spécificité: c'est la démarche d'une histoire "critique".

The problem of the African historiography becomes the fact that, failing to make an analysis of the present society (African society in capitalism - its specificity i.e. its specific mode of sociality), it wants to grasp its past outside of the specificity of the historical laws of the present society through which, by opposition, the past could be reconstructed. Of course, the form of sociality (in its colonial or post colonial phases) imposes itself on african historical studies. Colonialists or postcolonial "bourgeoisies" cannot give us other 'pasts' than those expressed through the civilizing mission of Europe or the African local initiative. The orientation African historiography takes, i.e., assuming that the past is given and that its understanding is the key to that of the present ("the anatomy of the monkey is the key to the anatomy of man"), is fundamentally empiricist and idealist. Adopting the problematic of natural materialism ("object independence") does not change the situation either.

"The real, "wrote BD," cannot be appropriated in thought without the mediation of categories." Yes. But, it is only through the mode of sociality (e.g. commodity form) of the current society that existing categories derive their efficacy: their critique (in Marx's sense of the critique of political economy - the dominant ideology of the current society) must first of all reveal the current cultural problematic of the reality (present society) against which those categories emerge before categories needed to deal with the reality opposite to the present can be developed.⁵¹ The historical reality is not "given" in the same sense that "natural reality" is - at least Marx denies this.

The most important idea I get from the BD critique of African historical studies is that these assume (or start off from the position for) the perpetuation of the current african society (as an integral part of capitalism) and thus assume a variant form of natural laws - or at least a certain "naturalness" - as motive force of this African society in the present society (capitalism). The natural condition of Africans was such that the European civilizing mission was necessary - for some; the good natural condition was hampered although not stopped by foreign European domination to fully realize itself - answered others. African history becomes the description of the realization or non-realization, in time and space (geochronology) of human nature in its African variant form. When the human african nature "fails", the geographical element decides everything! This is, of course, rigorously in conformity with bourgeois social theory - founded on the existence of universal natural laws.

J Israel wrote: "...to view the social world and its processes and structures as manifestations of universal and unchanging (functional) prerequisites. These prerequisites are postulated as much because human nature - being unaffected by social processes - is viewed as requiring a certain structure that guarantees order and harmonious development. All human beings are, according to this view born with certain capacities. They are supposedly used in order to maximize utility. The individual owes nothing to society and society therefore should not restrict his action. These individual actions, especially choices to maximize utility, when taken together, make up social processes. The latter thus are defined as the aggregate of individual actions. Society is then the results of the will of its individual actions. Society is then the results of the will of its individual members, who are guided by norms and values held in common. Conflicts arise when individuals deviate from these norms. Therefore they have to be punished. This, with different variations, is the theme of an idealistic methodology"⁵²

All those conceptions of the current african society, in which "fathers of the nations" are said to be its real geneological roots or where 'socialism' is spreading' from 'socialist presidents', can be easily recognized as pertaining to that idealistic 'methodology'.

In that sense, it is not quite correct to say, as BD do, that "their discipline (history) has no object!" (p.11). Its object is precisely to subordinate the study of the specificity of the present society (Bourgeois society is universal society') under the requirements of its "natural" perpetuation, to current appearances of things as happening as naturally as they should. That is to say, a geochronological search for natural laws governing the african society. Treating the process of capital accumulation as a "natural" rather than a class struggle process and deducing every idea from the requirements of Mr. Capital fall again into this naturalism. If history must deal with historical laws, historical specificity, then African historiography is in the main not dealing with history. Empiricism, i.e. that facts contain their own knowledge or truth, is nothing but a dictatorship of the given (it is like propounding the ideology of the Laissez - faire when you are the strongest power); under the domination of commodity form (with its commodity fetishism), empiricism becomes the fullest methodological/epistemological expression of the dominant ideology (political economy). And idealism, i.e. that ideas contain their own facts (or produce their facts) or that "reality is my dream" (Popper), is nothing but a way of disorienting people's attention from reality: the painful complaints of the appressed people are nothing but their own dreams. (its directive: think of reality as your dream, in your mind; the dominated status of Africa becones an expression of her own 'spirituality' - poor negritude!).

As long as African history will be written from the perspective of the outsiders who don't question the present society (capitalism) and who are thus removed from the dialectics of African class struggles themselves or from the perspective of the actors in African class struggles interested in the perpetuation of the present african society as an integral part of the present society (capitalism), idealism or empiricism will be inevitable in its methodology.

The present ruling classes of Africa who judge the output and value of history departments in terms of their "weight or efficacy" for "economic development" are more honest than careerists who think they are producing an important 'good' for everybody (for humanity)!

It is from the perspective of the actors in the practice of transformation (complete negation) of the current society in its African expression that the rejection of the so-called 'natural laws' governing African society (Africanism: authenticity, negritude, primitivism, communalism, etc) is possible and therefore the study of historical laws (the historical specificity of African society in the current society) will become not just an urgent task, but possible as well. Should we be surprised that with so many departments of history around, there is no single scientific study of the African liberation movements?

The tendency to take as a model of "scientific problematic" (logic, mathematics, physics, linguistics, biology, etc), a specific domain of scientific experimentation has often proven to be one of the sources of idealism in epistemological theories. Marx's "appropriate method for the appropriate subject matter" and Mao's "every science deals with a specific contradiction..... appropriate methods of resolution of the **specific** contradictions" are meant to deal with that problem. In fact, the dominant class forms of the division of labor, in theoretical work, exercise their domination through the transfer and imposition of theoretical models from a domain that materializes more fully the domination of the dominant ideology to other domains. The critique of the African historiography must first of all deal with these forms of domination rather than restrict itself to the theoretico-ideological limitations already assigned to it by the dominant ideology. Materialist history, BD explicitly say this, is a theory of the historical specificity of the entire present society (capitalism), it is not whatever aspect of the present society which is left out by "other social sciences". It must grasp the currency of the present society.

BD's worry about the possibility of deducing historical knowledge from a general theory of modes of production (Historical specificity I), should have, I think, led them to either reject or restrict such a theory. HSI is useless, unless used only, as a Sohn -

Rethol⁵³ proposes, as a "methodological postulate." Otherwise, it leads to a formalist 'historical combinatorics' - as tried by Etienne Balibar - whose concrete historical specificity cannot be determined. The main problem with this general theory of modes of production is that the concept 'mode of production' cannot be determinate unless conceived as mode of socialisation of individuals (mode of sociality) in so far as sociality produces individuals.⁵⁴ It is one of the senses in which marx uses the concept 'mode of production' especially in his so-called mature works. Only in that case that the very form (and not just the content) of a mode of production in society will be specific. But, if the law of combination of the variables (production relations, productive forces) is already given in the general theory of modes of production, any "specific" mode of production is a particular case and its specificity becomes difficult to define. And a combinatorics (the science of all possible combinations of the elements of modes of production) of the elements of modes of production becomes possible. This ideology of articulation (structuralist articulation), no matter how exciting, cannot be a substitute for a "concrete analysis of the concrete situation". The claim that modes of production are ahistorical is at best idealist if not just non-sensical. Even if modes of production are reduced to simple ways of talking about societies, language itself is historical. Even logic, the house of the 'pure concepts', is historical. What are these 'laws of motion' of something which is ahistorical? are they logical entailment forms? Capitalist social formations are then societies in which people use 'capitalist mode of production' to talk about their formations! How is this ahistorical mode of production going to be succeeded by another ahistorical one?

My 'brief comments' are becoming too long indeed! I should refer the reader, for further reading on these issues, to g. Deleplace who has given us a rigorous examination of them. It is too bad BD did not go through the history of the debates on the concept of mode of production and its application - I hope that this history does also exist for BD. Indeed, if a basic concept which is the corner - stone of a science is not determinate in its very definition (I am aware that concept and definition are not identical, contrary to Althusser) and application, how can it be the foundation of a science?

'Materialist perspective (or rather dialectical materialist p
problematic) in historical studies is more complex an issue than
simple' object independence', as BD seem to think. It would take
me too long to show that from the point of view of proletarian le
leaders (Lenin, Mao, etc) the current situation (also called by Lenin⁵⁵
present moment, present conjuncture, concrete situation, actual
situation, etc) is the central concept for historical analysis as
required by political practice. The concepts are of course under-
stood in precise problematic contexts. The basic ones are: socio
economic formation/conjuncture/period/epoch/stage.....from the point
of view of the structure; pre-revolutionary situation/revolutionary
situation....from the point of view of proletarian struggles; most
generally, the basic concepts of historical materialism are seen as
being: socio-economic formation/class struggle/dictatorship of the
proletariat/communism.⁵⁶ Communism is the theory of the process which
leads to communism; the theory of communism is the support of proletarian
politics and policy. It is communism//as theory//which transforms the prole-
tariat into a political class.⁵⁷ I will devote another paper to this
topic.

As a conclusion, let me say that a theory which makes of class
struggle the motive force of history should not "forget class struggles"
and thus forget also the central position of revolutionary practice
for historical materialism.

I would like to end these comments with my thanks to Elaine and
Henry Slater who read them before they were typewritten: we share,
although inequally the responsibility.

Annex I

MARX'S METHOD

Observed concrete
as put in theoretical form
by political economy = the
dominant bourgeois
ideology PE treats price
as an attribute of things
Foundation of Political
economy = existence of
natural economic laws.

Appearance

Analysis

"critique of
Political
Economy

INVERSION, BREAK

Relations: Marx/
Hegel Feuerbach/
Marx
Proudhon/Marx
Ricardo/Marx
Marx = Engels.

Theoretically grasped concrete:
the specificity of the present
society (capitalism) established.

Determination of the
conceptual structure
of capital

Determination: development of the
concept of value

30

value as social
relation

Foundation of Marx's Theory: non-
existence of natural economic laws

Based on Deleplace is
scheme p. 270

ANNEX 2.

Mao's theory of knowledge

Mao's philosophy on the theory of knowledge refutes completely Althusserian notion of the "theoretical practice" and is a decisive methodological contribution. This theory of knowledge is based on five questions: 1) what is to be known? 2) where does knowledge come from? 3) who produces and/or elaborates it? 4) How is it elaborated? 5) what is the criterium of truth?

Let me give very briefly the answers Mao gives:

- 1) It is not an "theoretically given object" which is to be known, but different forms of human practice. This is in agreement with Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, No. 1.
- 2) "Correct ideas come from social practice, struggle for production, class struggles and scientific experimentation." There are 2 forms of knowledge: one coming from the struggle for production and the other from class struggles. Natural sciences and social sciences are cristallisation of those 2 forms. Philosophy is the generalization and the summation of what is known on nature and society. (vol III).
Method comes from social practice.
- 3) Anyone who wants to understand a phenomenon must put oneself in contact with it: without participating personally in the practical struggle of its transformation, one cannot know the phenomenon. (Vol. I). One cannot know the taste of a pear without eating it.
- 4) Knowledge process passes through 2 stages: sensuous knowledge and rational knowledge. Everyone who thinks that rational knowledge can be obtained outside of sensuous knowledge ("comnaissance sensible") is an idealist.
- 5) "often, correct knowledge can be arrived at only after many repetitions of the process leading from matter to consciousness and then back to matter, that is, leading from practice to knowledge and then back to practice. Such is the marxist theory of knowledge, the dialectical materialist theory of knowledge." (Selected Readings.p. 503)

There is no other criterium of truth except social practice. It is through practice that the first leap (sensuous knowledge to rational knowledge) is experienced. (Tome I). This is against the Althusserian notion of "the criterium of truth is internal to theory" (which is really the view of systematic idealists: Plato, Hegel (one side of him only), Spinoza, etc.) Mao is in agreement here with marx's Theses on Fevrbach, no. 2, among other things.

ANNEX 3.

PROCESS OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

ACCORDING TO ALTHUSSERIANS:

- a) Methodological theses - geared towards a struggle against empiricism. Basis: re-affirmation of the necessity for each science to produce the concept of its object.
- Thesis 0: Reality exists independently of our knowledge of it; it is not produced by Men's thought nor by the development of an "Absolute Idea". - This is the fundamental thesis of "object independence" of materialism. Althusserians insist on its validity for society as well.
- Thesis 1: Knowledge process is a process of production as much as any other process of production: it is the activity of a theoretician (who carries out a theoretical practice), applying definite means of labour to determinate objects of labour to get a product.
- Thesis 2: The whole process of knowledge production takes place entirely in thought. The objects of (theoretical) labour ("Generality I") are notions or concepts previously produced, the means of labour ("Generality II") constitute the existing conceptual body, the product ("Generality III") is a new concept. The movement or operation which goes from "ideological knowledge" to scientific knowledge of a domain, operation inaugurating the "birth" of a science, is called "epistemological break"
- Thesis 3: That process is the mode of appropriation of the world by thought; it is different from the mode proper to art or to practical activity. There is no "problem of knowledge/ (the so-called the correlation or correspondence with reality), but, a theory of knowledge must provide a theory

the mechanism with which the "theoretical practice" is articulated to other practices in the process of appropriation of reality.

Thesis 4:

It thus follows that the primacy of practice does not mean the subordination of theory to other instances of human activity, since "the criteria of practice" is internal to the theoretical instance itself.

Thesis 5

In its accumulation process, knowledge goes from the abstract to the concrete, that is from general concepts to concepts which are richer in theoretical determinations, reproducing thereby under the form of "thought - concreteness" the complexity of the real concrete.

b) Ontological and gnoseological theses:

The whole as a complex and over determined whole.

"The complex structure of every concrete object governs the development of the object and the development of the theoretical practice which produces its knowledge".

These theses constitute Marx's dialectical materialism as read by L. Althusser.

The "fundamental theoretical revolution" of Marx is said to be the concepts of "Structural Causality" (against the 2 pre-existing notions: "linear causality" and "expressive causality").

Thesis 1: Reality presents itself as a structured whole, and not as an aggregation of homogeneous + juxtaposed elements. The whole is, first of all, a structure of structures, a system of relationships rather than an ensemble of elements. Elements are themselves defined only by their place in the structure. Consequences: i) the elements (people, f.e.) which serve as supports to those relationships disappear; ii) structures = contradictions. Capitalist & proletariat are defined as places in capitalist relations of production.

Thesis 2: Those structures articulate relationships which appear as "contradictions" between 2 aspects with one "dominating" the other; the meaning of the term 'domination' has to be specified every time in a context (structural/conjunctural).

Thesis 3 The whole is always already given to us as a complex whole. It is because of that complexity, that it is a concrete whole (reality) Reality does not develop from one simple unity, the ultimate beginning. It is inside a very complex whole that a simple category can appear.

Thesis 4 In every whole, there is a dominant structure, that is, the complex whole is a unity of a "structure articulee a 'dominante" (the domination is the unity of the whole).

Thesis - 5 Thus, "secondary contradictions are essential to the very existence of the principal contradiction, they constitute in reality its condition of existence" "Production relations are not the pure phenomena of the productive forces: they are also their condition of existence".

Thesis 6

Inside each structure in dominance, dominated structures and contradictions have their efficacy and their own autonomy which are always specified by the dominant structure which is thus "determinant in the last instance" Often domination and determination in the last instance are not exercised by one structure. (In the same way that the "fundamental contradiction" is distinct from a concrete "principal contradiction" in a given conjuncture.)

Theses 3 - 6 define the category "overdetermination"

Thesis 7

The dominant element of each one of the relationships of structures can be displaced.

Thesis 8

The explosion of a structure is made possible by the displacement of contradictions leading to the displacement of the dominance to a "strategical place" of "Condensation" of contradictions.
condensation/underdetermination/overdetermination.

N.B.: These are very brief notes and thus necessarily condensed.

For details See: A.Lipietz and Henri Rouilleault, sur la pratique..

FOOTNOTES

(TITLE)

1. Pierre Raymond, Materialisme Dialectique et Logique, Francois Maspero, Collection "Algorithme". Paris, 1977, pp. 69 - 70. This book raises very important questions concerning dialectical and historical materialism and opens a criticism, from the point of view of 'militant materialism' (Lenin), of ideologies of rigor (logico-mathematical and epistemological idealism) such as those of Hegel, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Bolzano, Popper, etc. See also his L'Histoire et les sciences, F.Maspero, Paris, 1975. Raymond has been studying what would be called materialist requirements of theoretical work. As we know, a materialist critique of idealist formalism (e.g. Althusser's theoreticism) would be reinforced strongly by a materialist position in logico-mathematical work. In that sense, a number of books published by this collection Raymond heads are of some interest: P. Raymond, De la Combinatoire aux Probabilities, F.M., Paris 1975; with others, Philosophie et Calcul de l' Infini, F.M., Paris. 1976; Michel Plon, La Theorie des jeux: une politique imaginaire, F.M.Paris 1976; Anne-Françoise Schmid, Une philosophie de Savant, ibid. 1978.
2. Pierre Raymond, "...et la Theorie dans la lutte des classes", Dialectiques Nos 15 - 16, p. 139.
3. It would be too long to provide here an exhaustive list of publications on this issue. Here are some of the most interesting ones (from my own point of view). Michel Clouscard, L'Etre et le Code, Edit. Mouton, Paris, 1973; Jacques Ranciere, La Lecon d'Althusser, Edit. Gallimard, 1974; Alain Badiou et F. Balnes. De l' Ideologie, F.M.Paris, 1976; Alain Badiou, Theorie de la Contradiction, F.M., Paris 1975; Alain Lipietz, "D'Althusser a'Mao?", Temps Modernes, nov.1973; Jean Fallot, Marx et le Machinisme (an unfortunate title: this is an introduction to Marx's theory of science). Edit. Cujas, Paris, 1967; Alain Badiou, "Le (Re) Commencement du materialisme Dialectique" Critique 1967; Michel Vadee, Le nouvel Idealisme epistemologique, Ed.Sociales, Paris, 1974.; Philippe Sollers, Sur le materialisme, Edit. du Senil, Paris, 1973, etc.

4. Etienne Balibar, Cinq Essais sur le materialisme Historique, F.M.Paris, 1974; Louis Althusser, Elements d'Auto-critique, Hachette, Paris, 1974 (translated as: Essays in self-criticism, NLR).; etc.
5. As says Mao; when we are in the case of which Lenin says that 'without theory there is no revolutionary movement,' the creation and propagation of theory plays the principal and decisive role. This does not, however, mean that theory is then an intrinsic revolutionary possibility and that "pure marxist theoreticians" must emerge. It means that in the contradiction theory/practice, which is the process of knowledge, theory is the principal aspect of the contradiction; that the systematisation of practical revolutionary experiences is the condition of development of revolutionary practice; that more experiences of the same wan't develop the revolutionary movement, what is needed is a qualitative leap, a rational synthesis immediately followed up with its application, i.e. its verification.
- 6 Alin Badiou, Theorie de la Contradiction, F.M.Paris 1975, esp.pp. 16-26. This small pamphlet tries to provide a logical (better: dialectical-logical) history of the development of theses of dialectical materialism in revolutionary movements. The best introduction to materialist dialectics I have seen. Badiou is by training mathematician and epistemologist. He is now a very important force in the Union of Marxist Leninists of France.
7. Alian Badiou & F.Balmes, De l' Ideologie, F.M.Paris: 1976. This book is probably the best scientific study of ideology in line with Marx/Engels' German Ideology; It contains the best critique of some aspects of Althusser I have seen and a thorough analysis of Engels. Peasant Wars in Germany.
8. Jean Fallot, Marx et le Machinisme, Paris: 1967 The most interesting study of Marx's conception of science rigorously based on Capital. It shows that Marx's concept of science gravitates around three main questions; for whom? by whom? how? It also shows that for marx, natural sciences will become really scientific only when they become also **social**. There is only one science: the science of History in its two aspects: natural and human.

9. Lonis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays. MRP., New York, 1971
10. John Mc Murtry, The structure of Marx's World view: Princeton University Press, 1978; chap. 6 discusses forms of consciousness according to marx.
11. Saul Karz, Theorie et Politique: Lowis Althusser. Fayard, Paris, 1974. Alain Lipietz & H. Ronilleault, sur la pratique et les concepts prospectifs du materialisme historique. (Mineo, 1972)
12. Lonis Althusser has advanced the notion of "process without subject" ("processus sans sujet") to refer to the historical process. In the philosophy of Hegel (esp. science of logic) this issue is dealt with with the problematic of the beginning. ("With what should a science begin?") Hegel, using the logic of iteration, wants to generate the necessity of movement from one initial beginning. The idea of one and simple beginning of everything is metaphysical. Lenin in vol. 38 of his Collected Works. examines Hegel's position (p.127 French text). Commenting Lenin's position, Althusser erroneously deduces from Lenin this notion of "process without subject" as the only absolute. (cf. 1. Althusser, Lenine devant Hegel, Maspero. p. 88). This, of course, leads Althusser to a difficult position: from whose point of view is this "process without subject" grasped? An important discussion on this question by A. Badiou, Theorie de la Contradiction, op.cit. pp. 54 - 61.
13. A Badiou & F. Balmes, op.cit. p. 29
14. Idem
15. Idem. p. 36
16. Idem p. 32

18. An important study has been devoted to this question by a number of scholars (8) of various disciplines:

Alf. Schwarz, Edit. Les Faux prophetes de l'Afrique
Les Presses de l' universite Laval, Quibec, 1980.
I deal, in that book, with the question of the so-called "African philosophy".

19. Alain Lieptz, Crise et inflation, Pourquoi? F.M.Paris, 1979.
pp. 16 - 20 See also: Harry Cleaver, Reading Capital Politically, University of Texas Press, Austin 1979.

20. Jacques D'Hont, L' Ideologie de la rupture. P.U.F., Paris 1978
This book analyses the ideology of "breaks" (epistemological break', catastrophe theory, social ruptures...) and demonstrates that the particular ideology of absolute break from Hegel by Marx is untenable.

21. See Mao's On Contradiction. A number of theoretical studies have been devoted to this essay. The best ones, as far as I know, are by A-Badiou, by Holybnychy, by Jean Guichard and by Ph.Sollers. There is even a mathematician, W.Leuvere, who has used the perspective to develop his theory of categories.

22. Sec. J. Israel, The Language of Dialectics and the dialectics of Language Humanities Press, New York, 1979, Chap.III.

23. Mao's essay. "Where do ideas come from?"

24. David-Hillel Ruben, Marxism and Materialism, Humanities Press, New Jersey, 1977, p. 96.

25. George Labica, Le Statut Marxiste de la philosophie: Editions Complexe, Brucelles, 1976.

In this work, the author examines the long and hard combat of Marx and Engels against and with philosophy, leading to two basic ideas: a) there is only one science, the science of history in its two inseparable or dialectical aspects, history of nature or what is called the science of nature (natural sciences), and the history of men; b) philosophy is an integral part of **ideology**. This is the best historical materialist study of marx's and Engels' relation to philosophy.

26. Alian Badiou, Theorie de la contradiction, op.cit. p. 25
27. David Hillel Ruben. op. cit. p. 66
28. A. Shon-Rhetel, Intellectual and Manual Labour, The MacMillan Press Ltd. London 1978. p. 190
29. Henri Wald, Introduction to Dialectical Logic: B.R.Guiner B.V., Amsterdam, 1975, p. 46
30. Alain Badiou, "Le (Re) Comencement du materialisme Dialectique" in Critique . 1967
See also: Le concept de Modele, F.M.Paris 1969
31. Thomas Khun, The structure of scientific Revolutions: Chicago, 1962.
32. Robert Foessert, La Theorie de la Societe 4 vols.
Edit. du Senil, Paris 1977 - 1979 esp. Vol.I.
33. Michel Plon, La Theorie des JenxL Unepolitique imaginaire
F.M.Paris. 1977
34. K.Marx, Capital Vol. I Postface (1873)
35. K.Marx, Capital Vol. I Postface (1873)
36. Alain Lieptz, op. cit. p. 17
37. Collected Works Vol. 38
38. Jacques Ranciere, Lecon d'Althusser. Ed. Gallimard, Paris, 1974
Also: A. Badiou et al. Le noyau rationnel de la dia-lectique Hegelienne, F.M., Paris 1978.
39. Tuomola. Theoretical Concepts.
40. I. Israel, op. cit. p.p. 23 - 28
41. G. Dumenil, Le Concept de "loi economique" dans le capital, F.M.Paris, 1978. I am also using Althusser's preface to the book which summarises its main theses.
42. This is Althusser's view also; preface to Dumenil's book.
43. Alain Badiou, Le(Re) commencement.....op. cit
also: Michel Clouscard, L'Etre et le Code, Mouton, Paris 1972, This is the most rigorous attempt at using logico-mathematical formalism to develop a historical materialist analysis of feudalism. It contains a fundamental critique of Husserl/-seen as the dominant philosophical aspect of the bourgeois ideology of contemporary society.

44. Michel Clauscard, op. cit. Introduction.
45. A. Badiou, Le (Re) Commencement... op. cit. & le concept de modele op. cit.
46. Ghislain Deleplace, Theories du capitalisme: une introduction;
F.M. Paris 1979.
See also with others, Marx et l'economie politique:
F.M. Paris, 1977.
47. On contradiction: The best text and comments, including a commentary of the Chinese ideograms, are by Philippe Sollers. Sus le Materialisme, Paris.1974.
48. Quoted by G. Deleplace, op. cit. pp. 204 - 5
49. Karl Marx, Grundrisse, Penguin Books, 1973, pp. 107-8 Capital 1, Penguin Books, Ltd. 1976, p. 929.
50. G. Deleplace, op. cit. p. 206
51. A John - Rethel, op. cit. pp. 194 - 195; p. 200
52. J. Israel, The Language of Dialectics and the Dialectics of Language, op. cit. 39.
53. A. Sohn - Rethel, op cit. Part IV. "Historical Materialism as methodological Postulate."
54. G. Deleplace, op. cit. chap. 4.
55. CERM. Lenine et le travail scientifique, Ed. Socials, Paris.1974.
Esp. G. Labica's essay.
56. For details see: Etienne Balibar, Cing Essais Sur le materialisme historique, op. cit.
also: A. Lieptz & M. Ronilleault, Sur les pratiques et les concepts prospectifs du materialisme dialectique.
Mimeo, 1972
//Stalin//
In the marxist - Lenin / tradition, history is seen through 3 dialectically related parts:
 - objective world history: pre-capitalism, pre-monopoly capitalism; imperialism (social imperialism)
 - history of the antagonistic struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie: first frontal class wars
June '48, Paris Commune 1871, October 1917, etc.
 - history of marxism: formation of the proletariat as a political class (marx, engels); first experience of the

proletarian dictatorship (theoretical formulationL
lenin, stalin); Mao Zedong (theory + practice of class
struggles against the new bourgeoisie under the dicta-
torship of the proletariat); Internationals

Lenin was an exemplary marxist, the theoretician of
tendencies, therefore of the political practice as the
dominant link of the chain of tasks. The theory of the
current conjuncture (present moment, current situation)
as a text requiring precise rules of reading and acting
in it (materialist dialectics: "the study of the contra-
dictions in the very essence of things' - lenin).

Present moment = conjuncture, necessarily: conjuncture/
crisis=2 struggle, above all class struggle, the truth
of social practice. Political practice --- strategy/
tactics --- compromise/scission ----- line/deviation...

Political) political, economical, ideological/theoretical)
practice) tasks --- tasks ----- tasks

"Politics is concentrated expression of economics
but politics cannot fail to have primacy over
economicsto forget this is to ignore
the ABC of marxism." Lenin to Bukharin.
(reported by memory).

BD fail to tell us anything about the complete conjuncture
in which African historiography is in crisis. Which "real"
crisis is it an expression of?

57. That is what unifies infernally the three contributions marx
explicitly attributes to himself in his letter to Weydermeyer.
See also: Paul Sandevince, Qu'est-ce qu'une politique marxiste,
Edit. Potemkine, 1978.