***Finding the Mind***



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Foreword

The first maxim of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi was a very simple phrase, yet a very enigmatic challenge to the person: ‘Know thyself’. This injunction is in fact the most opaque of all. Can we confront ourselves directly? Do we not always regard ourselves indirectly - *via* the social world we inhabit, our relationships with other selves and the objects that organise our proximal environment. Are we ever really transparent to ourselves?

And of course, there are aspects of human experience that occur without reflection, and ‘spontaneously’. Desire, attraction, phobia, disgust, pleasure, obsession, compulsion, dread, moral feeling, aesthetic sensibility, sexuality, gender-identity, ambition and other life orientations can all be areas that are ‘discovered’ within; the origins of which can be obscure to the individual themselves, and difficult or even impossible for them to explain.

One response to this challenge can be to head into the psychological interior, in an experiential inquiry that seeks an answer to the question: ‘What does it mean to be *me*’? Countless journeys of this kind give us worlds of poetry, narrative literature, and personal philosophies.

Another response is to ask ‘What is the ‘self’ *itself*, understood historically and as a social object?’ Here we mean the self in its social aspect, seen as an emergent thing immersed in a world of human relationships with other selves. Then ‘What *is* the ‘personal self’, and how can we explain it as a material object - ‘material’ in the sense of being social in origin, development and agency?’ And, arising from this, ‘What kind of materialismdo we need for such a task; one that can account for types of behaviour in specific historical contexts?’

Glancing ahead, for each of these questions respectively, the answers we will work towards are: ‘self’ understood as social strategy; and ‘materialism’ understood as the challenge of survival, and the concomitant negotiation of social – and existential – risk; with the various types of mental, cognitive, and conceptual repression that this entails for the person, and for organisations within class society.

And here also we will say that all aspects of the self are social in origin; and that biology – whilst dictating the absolute requirements for existence – does not determine interpersonal human behaviour.

Our aim ultimately is to describe how a general model-of-mind, can become a socially specific and personal mind, with all that entails for ideology, gender, and individual orientations in the world.

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Introduction

A fully ‘historical’ account of mental life must be at once general enough to serve as a ‘model-of-mind’, applicable across all human societies, at all times and in all places; whilst also adaptable enough to produce an explanation of ‘modes-of-mind’ that are specific to particular historical settings and geographical locations. Marxism famously offers explanations of historical consciousness and of ideology, and these provide an essential framing for any discussion of mind as a historical phenomenon. More difficult to locate within Marxism is a structural account of mind understood as a historical and social object: an account of mind *per se*.

One thinker who did offer theorisations of the mind in a structural sense, and also famously, was Sigmund Freud. Putting aside the question of whether one embraces Freud’s modelling of the mind, rejects it in *in toto*, or something in-between, it will serve here as a starting point for critical reflections about the mind. This will be by way of a comparison of the conceptual logic of Marx and the conceptual logic of Freud. In other words, this comparison will serve as a heuristic device to organise the direction of the discussion to follow. Along the way related questions will be visited, such as the relationships between mind and brain, the use of biology in explanations of human behaviour and the meaning of social causality.

Marxism provides the theoretical starting and ending points here. However, it is interesting, rewarding and sometimes important to engage with the ideas of Freud, even where we finally put them aside. This is an unfashionable thing to say. Freud is not a respectable reference in Anglophone academic psychology. In the long wake of Karl Popper’s critique in his 1962 *Science: Conjectures and Refutations,*[[1]](#footnote-1)Freud’s ideas are regarded as unscientific in failing the test of falsifiability, antiquarian and even quixotic. Freud has also fared poorly under feminist critiques that point to sexual stereotyping and misogynistic undercurrents in his theoretical constructions.[[2]](#footnote-2) Especially damning in this regard have been charges that Freud effectively colluded in the concealment of child abuse, rejecting the validity of accounts from his female patients of sexual molestation by their fathers during their childhoods, and casting these reports into the realm of fantasy.[[3]](#footnote-3)

There is also indeed sport to be had in trading in quotations from Freud’s vast complete works stretching to 24 volumes.[[4]](#footnote-4) In the end, for all of Freud’s eloquence as writer, many if not most of his speculative formulations, dream interpretations and pronouncements upon the human condition do not stand up well to a modern critical reading. Indeed, it would be easy to see Freud as important only for his place in European Twentieth Century culture; a figure merely of historical and perhaps biographical interest. But no more.

However, this all misses something important about Freud. Whilst his *oeuvre* reflects the Viennese *fin d’siecle* cultural landscape in which he worked and developed intellectually, it is also true that his work offers occasional insights into human behaviour that are thought-provoking; creating novel perspectives that may be relevant beyond the intellectual and cultural hinterland from which they emerged. Moreover, there are ideas and observations about the workings of the mind that should be taken seriously, even as only hypotheses, by any philosophy that is concerned with human oppression and its opposite, human liberation. So, it is the underlying logic of Freud’s formulations and categories that is the main interest here, and his significance as a ‘paradigm thinker’ that is used to evaluate the idea of affinity with Marxism.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Whilst Marx developed an understanding of how ideas are controlled in the interests of ruling classes, Freud examined the fine structure of inter-personal relationships and human passions. Marx traced the social, political and the psychological processes by which ruling ideas are propagated in society, and the ways in which exploitation under capitalism is eclipsed by the appearance of fair exchange. Freud suggested an intra-psychical mechanism by which outward familial relations become internalised into the life of the person.

Freud’s theorising of the human mind, and of human behaviour revolves around the pivotal concept of a repressed unconscious. Even where psychoanalytical categories are otherwise found to be incompatible with those that provide the foundations of Marxism, an appreciation of this notion, and its incorporation into a historical model-of-mind is something to be considered. Potentially, ‘repression’ can provide an explanation of the relationship between the person and their society that takes account of identities, behaviours, and desires over which they have little or no conscious control and which they experience as fate.

A key theme developing through this discussion then, is that the concept of ‘repression’, and of a ‘repressed unconscious’ derived from it, allows for an explanation of feelings that are experienced spontaneously by the person, and interpreted by them as ‘natural’. Obvious examples of this are the sexual urge, sexuality and gender; and there are other aspects to this that will also be explored. A central contention throughout is that ‘All is social’. In other words that the physical aspects of our bodies and the ‘wiring’ of our brains do not explain human behaviour or social relationships. Perhaps this is a provocative statement. Anticipating this, the general contours of the theoretical position to come are given here, mapping broadly the more detailed argument that will follow.

This exploration begins with the acknowledgement that there are indeed types of social experience and personal life that for the individual seem inevitable, merely a matter of inter-generational chance or of familial inheritance. For the Marxist this is problematic. Whilst seeking to avoid appeals to biological causes for things such as sexual feeling and attraction, because of the conservative tendencies this typically suggests, equally any reduction to culture can often be regarded as one-dimensional, idealist or unscientific.

An alternative to biology being used in a reductionist fashion to account for spontaneous human behaviour, is an appeal to ‘complex biology’; a biology that does not depend upon unilinear causality originating at the genetic level, travelling outwards to create phenotypic and behavioural effects. Rather, causality is conceptualised as multi-directional, causes and effects as changing places, and phenotype capable of influencing gene expression in processes described as ‘epigenetic’. The genome itself is seen as labile, with the transposition of genes occurring as sections of DNA relocate along a chromosome or even across different chromosomes; this also resurrecting potentially a version of Lamarckism, where chromosomal changes happen in gametes under the influence of the environment.

A type of complex biologism that became influential on the political left in the 1970s is ‘dialectical biology’. Associated with the work most notably of Richard Lewontin, this draws upon all the insights mentioned above, and more. Whilst such complex biological processes are fascinating, and indeed compelling in the accounts of life-processes given by scientists such as Lewontin and his collaborators[[6]](#footnote-6) in their popular publishing, the argument here will be that they should not be applied to human social behaviour beyond the most abstract accounts of human capacity. The issue is that where ‘biology’ resides as an assumption in our interpretations of specific social behaviour, there also will remain the search for biological causal mechanisms to explain it. At a more general level, the traditional ‘mind and brain’ problem in western philosophy, that revolves around interpretations of the relationship between the two, notwithstanding any insistence that they are ‘mutually influencing’ of one another, then gravitates back to naturalistic models of explanation. This is increasingly so with each leap of the brain sciences, and with each (amazing) discovery of the neuro-physical events that we experience as – and that substantively *are* - mental activity; and that we experience as spontaneous feelings and drives. The hypothesised ‘dialectical’ aspect of this complex biology is unstable when applied concretely to any specific human behaviour.

Navigating this wide river of inquiry, requires explorations of the tributaries running away from, though always returning to its main course. The questions concerned are old and difficult. ‘What do we mean by ‘mind’?’ ‘Can we speak of an authentic ‘self’ and if so, what might that mean?’ ‘What do we mean when we talk of a ‘materialist’ view of the world and of human behaviour within it?’ ‘As the science of the brain advances, can we discern how we might one day explain the mind?’ And ‘What of ‘human nature’, of sex and gender, of our ‘sense-of-self’, and of our inter-personal behaviours: do these aspects of our experience as human beings in fact emerge from our biology, from our social interactions, or both?’

If we do put biological categories aside, the question remains ‘What then is our alternative theoretical framework to account for those affective states that we experience spontaneously and as ‘natural’?’ Answering this question will require reformulation of some elements and aspects of Marxism itself; and a novel reworking of the meaning of ‘materialism’ in explanations of human behaviour. But before we embark on that perilous journey, we will consider in more detail what has gone before and the most historically prominent and influential attempts to explain the human mind as a social object.

In Part I we will reflect upon the various philosophical speculations on the nature of mind through history. Also, we will consider how mental life has been treated within the Marxist tradition, how Freud modelled the mind in different phases of his career, and the attempts made to bring these two entirely different traditions of thought together on this question. Finally, we will introduce the important notion of ‘first and second nature’ found within Marxism as a means by which an account of the mind can be framed.

Part II will offer an account of the human mind that is located within the major categories of Marxism. However, this will also be with amendments to some of its organising elements. ‘Materialism’ within Marxism for instance, will be premised upon ‘risk’ in relation to social success and survival, crucially involving the principle of psychological ‘repression’ imported from psychoanalysis. The result is a ‘social materialism’ that acts as a third term mediating between the individual mind and its historical context; and one also that illuminates the behaviour of individuals, social groups, and organisations.

In Part III, we will trace the historical interactions between Marxism and psychoanalysis. This interaction has been continuous since the early part of the Twentieth Century and is itself something to be explained. The rises and falls of these interactions, the historical episodes in which they happened, and the controversies they engendered, are each revealing in different ways of the social meaning of the struggles from which they emerged. They expressed both the hopes for human liberation in periods of resistance, revolt and revolution, and the despair of the defeats into which those revolutions plunged. They often also exposed the theoretical weaknesses and ideological fragmentations of the dominant political conceptualisations within those historical eruptions.

# **Part I: Modelling the mind**

## Views of the mind

The question of ‘the mind’ understood as something ‘non-material’ existing in a material body has vexed western philosophy since the European Enlightenment. Before this, in the ancient world, precursor ideas of the mixing and merging of the non-material and the material infused the symbolism of myth and religion. The towering figure Gilgamesh of the ancient Mesopotamian capital of Uruk, drew his strength from being two thirds god, one third human. In the pre-Socratic Hellenic world, the trade in ideas between Greece, Asia, Africa, and the Near East provided the basis for the mysticism of Pythagoras for whom the soul consisted of three parts: feeling; intuition; and reason. Of these, reason alone, inhering in the brain, was immortal. In the *I-Ching*, or ‘Book of Changes’, as it was developed by Wen Wang of the Zhou dynasty of 11th Century BC China, the ordered metaphysics of the yang – the celestial (and male) principle of light, energy, and productivity – and the yin – the earthly (and female) principle of body, matter and death – provided the key to all reality.

In 5th Century Greece, the status of ‘the soul’ also animated philosophical controversy. Plato held that the soul was insubstantial, and an essence that would survive the end of corporeal existence. For Aristotle, rather the soul was a form essentially inseparable from the human body, as the general aspect of specific human attributes. So ‘behaviour’ was the general aspect – the form – of myriad behaviours; ‘motion’, the form of many motions; *etc.* ‘Soul’ then, was the form of human life, and so perishable with the human being to which it belonged.

Each of these takes on the question of the relationship between a ‘material’ and a ‘non-material’ aspect to human existence, would later shape different intellectual traditions and historical phases of theological teaching in the mediaeval Christian church. Neo-Platonism was to shape the foundational concepts on the question of the soul – seen as having an existence both before and after corporeal existence – and its relationship to the body, in the teachings of Augustine. The ancient Hellenic notions of materialism, eclipsed for generations by Christian Neo-Platonist theology, began to find an echo once again in the Thirteenth Century works of Thomas Aquinas. Responding to the late mediaeval encounter with the rationalism of Islamic science and mathematics in the work of figures such as Avicenna and Averroes, Aquinas returned to the original texts of Aristotle, adapting them for the Christian theology of his time. For Aquinas the soul came to represent the form of all living beings. For all animate beings other than human beings, the soul would perish with its corporeal body. For human beings however, and departing from Aristotle’s hylomorphic immanentism, the soul was both substantial in this animal sense, but also subsistent, meaning that it continued after corporeal death, remaining also capable of mental activity. In this sense it was metaphysically of two worlds, having an existence rooted in both the material world and in the spiritual world that was inhabited by purely subsistent beings such as angels and the heavenly divinities.

**‘Brain’ and ‘Mind’.** These are not ontologically the same. ‘The brain’ is a ‘discrete object’; having an enclosed, and boundaried status, and with an internal structure that can be distinguished from its surroundings. ‘The mind’, by contrast, is a ‘relational object’, existing *between* human beings, and inferred from mental states and behaviours derived from myriad social interactions. This important distinction becomes lost in the application of biological categories – including those of dialectical biology - in explanations of mental states.

In the modern era, the question of the co-existent relationship between the ‘material’ and the ‘immaterial’ in the human being, was given a new and rationalist expression in the seminal work of René Descartes on the relation between body and mind. For Descartes the body had ‘extension’ in space, was divisible and was material; whereas the mind did not have extension, was indivisible and was immaterial. Whilst animal spirits conducted motion throughout the body, mind was located in the pineal gland, through which also the passions of the soul were transmitted. This ontological dualism came to represent a pivot for much of the European philosophy that was to follow, representing a reference point for philosophers of mind to the present day.

Whilst for Descartes, the mind was substantial – an immaterial ‘ghost’ in a material bodily ‘machine’[[7]](#footnote-7) – for David Hume, the mind did not exist at all as a unified, substantial entity. Rather experiences grouped together in associative ‘bundles’ to create the illusion of a ‘self’.

In contrast to Hume’s ‘Bundle Theory’, Immanuel Kant did hold to a notion of mind; one that was intrinsically involved in his theory of knowledge, setting its limits. However, rather than offering a model-of-mind *per se*, Kant’s scattered comments on ‘mind’ addressed its operations - what it does, rather than what it is.

For Kant, mind provides the conditions of knowledge of the world. Crucially, space and time provide the constitutive framework for the intuitions by which apperception - the bringing of external objects into the mind – creates experience. For Kant, the mind also plays a synthesising role. This refers to its ability to create unified constructions from the disparate elements of experience and cognition. This he saw as happening in three connected ways. First, the mind constructs the spatial and temporal structure by which we can apprehend objects in the world: ‘Synthesis of Apprehension in Intuition’. Second, the objects that we apprehend must be brought into a unified field of other objects as they became incorporated into mental (‘imaginary’) processes, understood in relation to one another: ‘Synthesis of Reproduction in the Imagination’. Third, objects must be recognised in the conceptual form in which they can become known to a mind: ‘Synthesis of Recognition in a Concept’. A fundamental function of the mind for Kant, was its facility for the unification of manifold reality into representational singularities within thought.

Whereas Kant’s functionalist view of mind, had transcended immediate, local, or temporal context, Hegel viewed mind, not as a universal structure, but rather as developing in time, as historical and as inter-subjective. For Hegel mind is essentially ‘activity’. Indeed, it was Hegel’s intention to reconcile historically relativizing categories with Kant’s universalist account of human cognition, that gives his philosophy its animus. He called this paradox of the temporal and the eternal in the human condition, the ‘finite-infinite’.

For Hegel, the concepts that necessarily mediate the objects of the external world as they enter the mind, allowing comprehension to emerge from apprehension, are the basis of the logic that gives rise to understanding. These concepts require a consciousness to which they belong. More than this however, they give rise to self-consciousness as the holder of the concept becomes aware of it as something distinct from them, whilst simultaneously belonging to them. Fundamental to all of this is the recognition of other self-conscious beings, that result from the same concept-object dialectic, and that are also the source of the mediating concepts themselves.

These steps in Hegel’s logic effect a shift from the workings of mind-in-itself, to the workings of mind-in-the-world: from ‘subjective spirit’ to ‘objective spirit’. It represents the ‘materialist-side’ of Hegel’s system, taking us from a consideration of the internal dialectic of the subjective self, to the processes of inter-subjective communication located in family, cultural, religious, and ethical life.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Does ‘brain’ cause ‘mind’?** The brain affects mental activity in many ways. The tragedy of neurodegenerative disease makes this abundantly, and terribly, clear. The chemical effects of hallucinogenic and psychotropic drugs provide another example. Tumours in the brain can create disinhibited social behaviour. Another awful example is that brain mal-development caused by *in utero* maternal malnutrition, can result in lowered mental capacity later in the infant. Hormones we know can affect concentration and mood. Many people in their older years, will also be familiar with the challenges of new learning as neuronal networks form more slowly and with fewer connections. Finally, as we get older, as our brains lose neuronal networks and connections, we become forgetful. Obviously, brain states affect mental function.

However, it does not follow that the neuronal events that make mental life possible, are therefore responsible for its *content*; and it is the content where our interest lies, because that is where mental activity connects with social behaviour. So, whilst brain activity creates the general capacity for mind as well as mental function (focus, agility, clarity, abstractive facility, memory, and so forth), it does not create its specific and social consequences or meaning in ways that are relevant to questions about the relationship between brain and social behaviour.

In the Twentieth Century, debates about the nature of mind took different directions, often beginning with starting points provided by these earlier philosophical traditions but influenced also by discoveries in brain research. Common to most however, was a naturalistic paradigm that saw all aspects of mental life as ultimately material; in other words, intrinsically neuronal activity, albeit with different opinions about the types of causation involved.

One approach that dominated the philosophy-of-mind in this period, and that continues to do so, has been ‘functionalism’. Functionalism is an all-encompassing term for a range of perspectives that regard the various aspects of mind in the light of the inputs and outputs that give rise to them. Drawing upon cognition-research, empirical psychology, linguistics and computational science, functionalism, more than any other discourse on mind and its associated states, has drawn upon developments in modern science and technological paradigms for support. In ‘computational theories’ of mind, mental processes have been compared to the ‘software’ that provides the informational content to the ‘hardware’ of the brain. Algorithmic, programmatic and logic-based analogies have created overlaps with speculation about the possibilities of artificial intelligence, machine thinking and possible other types of mind. In ‘identity theories’ of mind, mental states have been seen as essentially brain states, defined solely by neuronal networks and pathways. Some influential functionalist approaches in modern discussions of the mind, and concordant with thinkers such as David Hume in the 18th Century and Gilbert Ryle and W. V. Quine in the 20th century, have rejected the notion of ‘mind’ itself as a substantive entity. Such ‘eliminative’ positions continue to be promoted today in the work of philosophers such as Daniel Dennett and Patricia Churchland. What is eliminated in these approaches, is the mind of ‘folk-psychology’ by which the mind of another is presumed to be real, based upon their outward behaviours and responses to one’s own intentional behaviour.

Considering eliminativism to be at one extreme of a spectrum of a range of different theories-of-mind, at the other we can position psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, certainly in its classical early 20th Century form accounted for mind as an existent thing, explained as a substantive structure, and animated by identifiable psychical forces. At different stages of his publishing career Sigmund Freud developed various accounts of psychical processes and human development and behaviour.

Here they are in summary:

* the economic model, characterised by physicalist assumptions of energy balance, quantified energy flows, mechanical force, and electrical discharge;
* the topographical model, organised around different levels of consciousness;
* the psychodynamic model, rooted in drives towards pleasure and gratification, and also inhibitory defences;
* the genetic model, through which the individual develops in psychosexual stages – oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital - linked to the erogenous zones of the body;
* the structural model, comprising separate and rivalrous entities that make up the totality of the individual psyche: the id; the ego; and the superego.

Of these, the two models that approximate most closely to what we can recognise as models of mind were the topographical model and the structural model.

The topographical model, first presented in Freud’s The *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), comprised: a conscious realm of self-aware mental- and life-activity; a pre-conscious realm of hidden, but easily accessible memories; and an unconscious realm of repressed experiences and traumas accessible only by the work of analysis. The structural model, presented in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), consisted not only of ‘areas’ of mental activity, but of active entities that overlaid these, each with their own strivings and agendas. These were: the id, all-consumed with basic desires and drives; the ego, concerned with navigating a path through reality towards all kinds of wish-fulfilments and goals; and the super-ego, concerned with higher values and social obligations.

In the modern era what had disappeared from all the most established philosophical positions, was any lingering notion of the ‘immaterial’, and the ontological dualism that had characterised thinking on the mind from Plato’s soul to the Cartesian paradigm. However, whilst ‘materialist’ discourses have come to dominate entirely, seeing all mental activity as ultimately the ‘matter-in-motion’ that is neuronal activity, rather than appealing to incorporeal vital forces, this does not necessarily entail mechanical reductionism, and the physicalist tendencies it creates. ‘Dual-attribute’ theories of mind, for instance’, informed by the notions of ‘substance’ and ‘mode’ of Benedict Spinoza, emphasise the radically different types of brain activity that we can designate as ‘higher mental state’, and ‘basal brain function’, both being located entirely in a neuro-physical material substrate. In this – *differentiated* - materialism, the various types of mental activity, for example those associated with symbolic thinking, abstract reasoning, emotional communication and so on, whilst all seen as manifestations ultimately of the brain’s material processes, are also seen as belonging to different orders of that same material reality.

Still, the characterisation of ‘mind’ as essentially ‘material’, is taken as a given for the rest of our speculations. We will consider more closely what these terms might mean exactly.

**What is ‘materialism’?**

The statement that ‘All is matter’ is not new. The idea that no entity exists, human or otherwise, that is not ultimately reducible to a material substrate, one that does not depend upon anything divine or supernatural for its creation or sustenance, we can trace back at least to the pre-Socratic philosophers of Ancient Greece. The cosmologies of these various philosophical schools all had their different elemental substances. Competing ontologies emerged from the Milesian school especially. Thales of Miletus, teaching in the 7th Century BC held that water was the irreducible basis of reality. For the generation that followed, the students of Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes chose different foundational substrata: Anaximander, an abstract and featureless substance, apeiron; and Anaximenes, air. For Heraclitus of the Ephesian school of the late 6th and early 5th Centuries BC, fire was the source of the flux of the natural world. For Empedocles it was the combination of four irreducible substances – earth, air, fire, and water - that in their different combinations, and organised by the two opposing forces of love and conflict, create the world as we experience it. For the philosophers of 5th Century Elea, Parmenides and Zeno, the multiplicities of our experienced reality were reducible to ‘the One’: a singular, imperishable and unchanging substance. Even Plato, the philosopher of Forms, the immaterial soul, and The Divine Craftsman, offers a materialist cosmology in *The Timaeus*. There, his character Timaeus explains, the world is comprised of the four elements - again of earth, air, fire, and water - each constituted of atom-like polyhedra that combine in different chemical and mathematical amalgamations; albeit supported by the mysterious ‘Receptacle’.

At the heart of these metaphysical systems in each case was a quest for a fundamental and self-supporting realm; a material substrate that was indivisible, so representing an absolute endpoint for analysis. The most prescient of these ancient formulations came with the atomism of Leucippus, and after him of his student, the Thracian Democritus. For both, ‘atoms’ were indeed indivisible, and eternal; assembling, disassembling and reassembling, so creating the objects of human experience as they moved through the void. For the 4th Century BC philosopher and follower of the teachings of Democritus, Epicurus, also the observable world was the result of the movement of invisibly small atoms; although with the difference that each could move indeterminately, at points ‘swerving’ randomly in its motion.

This philosophical atomism was carried into the cultural undergrowth of mediaeval scholasticism and early Renaissance thought by a single Roman text written in the 1st Century. The *De Rerum Natura*, the creation of the Epicurean Lucretius, described the cosmos as having emerged from Chaos; and the material world the result of the churn of an infinitude of materially irreducible particles; the atoms.

We will reflect briefly upon this classical atomism, before updating its story. The imagery of ‘the atom’ is thus far a sensory one. That is, the atoms are ‘material’ in the same way that our felt world is material. The atom then, is an extension into the invisibly small scale of our own familiar reality; the meaning of ‘material’ being of a kind with that of the ‘matter’ that we experience.

This ‘materialism of the tangible’ however, is qualified by the notion of ‘force’. Forces are aspects of the material domain, of course, but they are not material in the same sense. Whilst we know their existence through the *movement* of matter, they are not *per se* materially substantial. For the pre-Socratics as we have seen the forces that drove the movement of atoms could be animistic: ‘love’ and ‘strife’, for example. The notion of force was to change with the emergence of modern scientific thought. In the 17th Century Newton’s gravitational theory put the idea of force at the centre of a new cosmology; its mathematical exactitude echoing the Pythagorean insistence upon ‘number’ as the root of things. Later, Dalton’s atomic theory and what was much later to become the Rutherford-Bohr model of the atom, required inter-atomic forces that held together atoms in precise mathematical combinations. Force theory has since developed to include strong and weak inter-molecular forces, electrical forces and an array of force-bearing sub-atomic particles and quantum-forces (gauge-bosons) that mediate the motion of material particles (fermions). The strangeness of this modern materialism is only compounded by other counter-intuitive components of current cosmological modelling, such as the mysterious ‘dark matter’, and the even more mysterious ‘dark energy’.

So, ‘materialism’ is not quite the reduction of everything to ‘matter’ (to be precise, the ‘baryonic matter’ of our experiential world). Perhaps better to say that materialism refers to the idea that all is explainable in ‘material terms’; so, matter and what pertains to matter. But again, this tautology throws us back upon the exact meaning of our language; and specifically, upon the meaning of the word ‘matter’, which, given its hazy status in modern scientific thinking (in the lay imagination, at least) is problematic for the clarity we wish to achieve. Perhaps we should simply say that all is explainable within the nature of the reality that is independent of the human mind; whatever that turns out to be. Naturally, that up-ends any notion that there is something exceptional about the mind itself; something non-material, that is. Into the frame here of course come religious and quasi-religious notions of spirit, super-naturalism and intelligent creation that invest life, and especially human life, with divine charm.

So, ‘materialism’ in this primary sense, is above anything else a comment upon the status of the human mind. In its classical and modern meanings, and regardless of any current theorising of the nature of the physical world, it is essentially a philosophical position; one that decentres the human mind from any enthroned special status as being something other than part of the totality of ordinary things. This philosophical materialism is essentially the stance of the opponents of religion.

This is the meaning that unites the materialism of the ancient world with that of its modern proponents; and precisely so. For Epicurus, mind cannot be incorporeal as Plato had taught; mind must indeed be matter. The picture that was painted by Lucretius in *De Rerum Natura* was of a cold universe, indifferent to the suffering of humankind. The gods, though they existed had not created the cosmos, and did not involve themselves at all in the human affairs. Moreover, death was the end; no incorporeal substance would remain.

**What is mind?**

We will begin with a more general question: ‘What is it that we have in mind when we ask, ‘What is mind?’’ Of course, there are many aspects to this: ideas; conceptualisations of objects; self-awareness; decision-making; conscious apprehensions of the world; awareness of other selves; intuitions; mental activity; sense-of-self; *etc.* These and other things can be treated as examples of the *content* of mind, rather than mind itself: ‘mind’ being the substantive structure that accommodates these components; or is their sum; or perhaps their articulating medium. For Freud, we would have to consider the term ‘psyche’ as covering these attributes, but also including the sexual and gendered self; and of course, the unconscious. For Marx, we would have to consider the term ‘subject’ understood both in its individual meaning, and with regard to its more general status as the active - or conscious - side of history. So, we are talking of the total mental life of human being, and chiefly (and less tautologically) of the interior aspects of humanity’s relationship with its environment; and of the relationship of the person to their own environment, understood as both the external world that they inhabit and the internal emotional landscape that supports their ‘sense-of-self’.

Later, we will inquire, ‘Is there are commonality between Marx (and Marxism) and Freud (and psychoanalysis) on the question of relationship between the mind and its external world?’

**Mind and matter**

There is a philosophical tradition that sees mind as a direct and immediate product of matter in motion; the result of sensory and motor stimuli alone. Versions of this kind of mechanical materialism proliferated in publications from the mid-Eighteenth Century, into the early Nineteenth Century. Julien de La Mettrie in *L’Homme machine* (1748), had suggested a mechanistic view of human activity, rooted in the nerve impulses of the brain. In his *Systèm de la Nature* (1770) Paul d’Holbach identified cognitive and emotive states as being the result of modifications of the brain. And in his *Relations of the Physical and the Mental in Man* (1802) Karl Vogt gave his readers the evocative image of mind as being no more than a secretion of brain activity: ‘The brain secretes thought, the way the liver secretes bile’.

David Hume, building upon John Locke’s rejection of an innate origin of ideas and mind, had argued that experience is the basic source of all mental concepts. For Hume the sensory inputs of the physical world created mental impressions that combined to produce simple and - by the operations of the imagination - complex mental objects.[[9]](#footnote-9) ‘Mind’ for Hume, was no more that the ‘bundle’ of perceptions created by experience, with no underlying substance.[[10]](#footnote-10)

This Humean attitude on the question of mind found its Twentieth Century expression in Gilbert Ryle’s *The Concept of Mind* (1949). For Ryle, an act of thinking is what thinking is; an act of intelligence, the intelligence itself. In other words, there is no entity (that we call ‘mind’) that is the source, or cause, or ‘I’ that underlies these acts. The physical aspect of mental events is what they are; and nothing more. To think otherwise is to recreate the Cartesian dualism that Ryle sets out to close the door on and is to mistake one type of reality for another. It is to confuse categories.

Ryle’s theory of mind provided the foundation for the emergence of an ‘identity theory’ of mind, pioneered by the generation of British philosophers that followed. According to the ‘identity’ school what we experience as ‘mind’ is identical to, and nothing more than brain activity. In other words, each mental state, or object of consciousness, equates to, indeed *is*, a corresponding ‘brain-state’. For Ullin Place, all higher conscious functions are analytically (and eventually, empirically) reducible to physical events in the brain.[[11]](#footnote-11) ‘mind’ then becoming a redundant term, and an unscientific fiction.

Finally, in the anti-humanist philosophising of B. F. Skinner[[12]](#footnote-12) human beings are treated as no more than the combinations of outwardly observable actions; and in the aggressive materialism of Daniel Dennett (a student of Ryle’s in the 1960s) consciousness is seen as the result of mechanical sensory-input-feedback loops; a type of ‘narrative editing’ process by which our sense-of-the-world is created.[[13]](#footnote-13)

In each of these behavioural models, ‘mind’ has become a redundant term, and an unscientific fiction.

**Mind and qualia**

The most important objections to the reduction of mind to matter, apart that is from philosophical dualisms that insist upon the mind as a non-material substance, have come from the theory of ‘qualia’.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, in the 5th Century, in his *Confessions* pondered the strange status of the remembered sensation:

*Yea, I discern the breath of lilies from violets, though smelling nothing; and I prefer honey to sweet wine, smooth before rugged, at the time neither tasting nor handling, but remembering only.*[[14]](#footnote-14)

Here he puzzles over the question of what it is exactly that we are ‘remembering’ when we conjure something into our minds from our previous experience. The object is no longer there. The experience is in the past. The sensations are no longer present. What is it then that is before us, or within us, when we recall the scent of a flower, or the taste of honey and wine? With these questions he was touching upon the modern quandary of the quale.

The quale (‘qualia’ in the plural) is the uniquely subjective aspect of mental experience. When we experience the ‘redness’ of a red object we do not experience light of a certain wavelength, nor sensory neural transmissions, not even the brain processing by which we recognise colour. What we experience is the phenomenon of redness *itself*, in *this* moment, as an attribute of *this* object, and in *this* context, *etc.* And, the argument goes, that phenomenon is different than the events that science tells us are occurring to create it. It has a reality of its own, and one that cannot be accounted for by appealing to the brain states that accompany it. We can take this notion further by factoring in human meaning. If the ‘redness’ is also the redness of the coat my daughter wore when she was a toddler, bringing back memories of a happy autumn day (and so forth), then the uniqueness of the phenomenon understood as a quale becomes more compelling, forcing us to confront a simple question: ‘Can physical events in the brain adequately account for, or even have relevance to, the experience of redness I am having when I bring such memories to mind?’ If not, then we part company with the physicalism that characterises the identity theory of mind.

The most widely cited argument for qualia comes from a 1982 paper by Frank Jackson.[[15]](#footnote-15) In a thought-experiment Jackson asks us to imagine a character, Mary, who has been raised in an entirely monochromatic environment, learning all there is to know about the world *via* a black-and-white television. She even comes to know the entirety of the physical aspects of the sense of vision and colour. Still however, when she is finally exposed to the colour red, she learns something new: *that* is how ‘red’ looks. The actual sensation of colour then, according to Jackson, is something that a materialist account of experience cannot completely explain.

Daniel Dennett responded to the challenge of the quale in his *Consciousness Explained* (1991).[[16]](#footnote-16) For Dennett the mystery of the quale lies in the limitations of language, rather than in reality itself. Mary, he argues, (he invents a robot version of Mary) could indeed construct for herself an understanding of the experience of redness, if the language available to an interlocuter was fine-grained enough to capture the nuance, subtlety and uniqueness of that experience. The mystery of the quale then, for Dennett, is one of communication; and so not really a mystery at all. For Dennett the quale does not exist.

As a defence of the materiality of subjective sensations Dennett’s argument is perfectly plausible. After all, Jackson’s positing of the experience of ‘redness’ need only be seen as the subjective ‘this-sidedness’ of an entirely material substrate; the manifest, ‘surfaced’ aspect of otherwise hidden events. And yet, Jackson’s qualia (and St. Augustine’s musings on remembrances) do retain an aura that remains difficult to dismiss. The reducing of unique subjective episodes to electro-chemical events does seem problematic, albeit perhaps from a position of philosophical naiveté. And to see the full richness of human subjective experience as the result only of a series of brain-states does challenge our sense of how it feels to live.

This apparent paradox is resolvable; for the question is not about whether a subjective moment is the experience of a particular brain-state at all. Rather, it is whether a brain-state is the *cause* of that subjective moment. We can straightforwardly say that subjective experiences, cognitive apprehensions of world and emotive associations are all physical events in the brain (and indeed the body), without resorting to a reductionist standpoint that eviscerates them of their full human meaning. The reason for this, is that asserting the materiality of consciousness does not tie us to the hypothesis that the brain is the cause of consciousness. Indeed, the argument that mental events are neuro-physical is a trivial one – *philosophically* speaking; to insist upon it may be correct, but it is also banal.

It is far more important (and interesting) to consider this proposition: Mental events, moments of cognition and consciousness and indeed mind itself, are *relational* objects. Their regularity, predictability and durability are the result, not of the neuronal activity that accompanies them, but rather of the social structures and inter-personal processes that create them. Our explanations of them then need to be located in the more appropriate domain of social causality.

**Mind and society**

We can conceive of the contents of mind, and of mind itself, quite differently to their being reducible to physical events in the brain. It is better to understand them as the result of *interactions* of the brain with the brains of others, in socially structured human relationships. The locus of our quandary then, and the clarity we seek lies not *within* the brain, but in the fields of meaning and action created by social relationships and processes. The coagulations of social meaning that emerge are introjected as social complexes, in turn accumulating into associations, social constructions, personal and group identities and behavioural motifs. Moreover, these subjective processes draw for their fullest meaning upon the countless human interactions that have gone before. Mind is material, of course; and – let’s all agree - a mind could not exist without a brain. But to look for ‘*the* mind’ (a relational object) in ‘*the* brain’ (a discrete object) is to create an unnecessary mystery – a ghost that beckons us into a wasted philosophical journey; a category error that belongs to the physicalists in the debate – one all of their very own. For a mind is the creation not of *a* brain, but of many brains (and bodies) in interaction. In other words, it is the result of society, culture and history; and in society, culture and history we find also its material (and institutional) reality.

**Where are the ‘causes of mind’?** We must distinguish between the general capacity for mind that is enabled by the brain; and the specific mental aspects we wish to explain. Whilst we can marvel at the unfolding mysteries of the gross structures of the human brain, and our emerging insights into neuronal processes, these do not *per se* explain any *specific* trait of human social behaviour; for these latter, we must investigate the nature of the society in which any given behaviour occurs to illuminate its origins. It is in the social structure then then we must locate our search for explanations.

## The matter of ‘mind’ in Marx and Freud

**Marx and Freud: passing comparisons**

The possibility of a relationship between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and Freudianism particularly, has a long and convoluted history. Best described, perhaps symptomatically, as a ‘struggle’, it has produced elegant innovations in thought, as well as excruciating conceptual wrangling; alternately a source of creative and even profound insight, as well as of ingenious theoretical acrobatics. In short, the ‘relationship’ has had the character of the ‘on-and-off’ type that on the whole is ultimately unsatisfying, and some would say was probably best never begun.

And yet, attempts to reconcile these two edifices of thought about the human condition have been made repeatedly since the second decade of the Twentieth Century, in phases that have emerged from and in various ways reflected, the dramas, conflicts and agonies of their day. There has been a historically recurring fascination with how these two quite different theoretical endeavours might complement, correct, or complete one another. In some respects, the motivation has been driven by the notion that they addressed different areas of human activity exclusively; each therefore having something to ‘learn’ from the other. However, only an highly selective reading of both – and the mistaken view that Marx was concerned only with economic life, and the equally mistaken view that Freud was concerned only with sex - could support such a position. At deeper levels of conceptual focus, some have held that there are voids, structural blind-spots in one or both leading to errors and theoretical directions that in some way ‘get humanity wrong’. For others the issue has been not which is right and which is wrong, but rather which of these bodies of theory is the more fundamental; assuming then, that whilst both are valid in their own sphere, one is in some sense reliant upon the other.

Before any systematic comparison of these two theoretical traditions sometimes comes the suggestion that in intellectual ‘atmosphere’ they are alike; that there is about them something of an affinity of intellectual temperament, of unsentimental objectivism, and of personal iconoclasm. The unflinching commitment that each had to penetrating the appearances of reality, to its underlying essence, enabled the original contributions they each made; their respective ‘discoveries’. For Marx, the realisation of the centrality of abstract labour as the source of value under capitalism rather than that of any one type of labour, the fundamental role of class in history, and the derivation of the power of the state from civil society all involved overturning established theoretical constructions within the fields of the economic, historical, and political sciences. For Freud the discoveries of ‘the unconscious’ as a hidden realm of repressed trauma and dangerous desires that affects the person throughout their life, the reality of an ‘infantile sexuality’ in the pre-pubescent child, and the decisive role of the family in the gendering of the person, all established him as a figure of theoretical controversy, not to mention public scandal.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In all of Freud’s theorising, consciousness is built upon ruses, self-deceptions, and protective defences against reality. Only by the work of analysis can the truth be revealed, and the person achieve self-understanding to be brought into a tolerable life-orientation. In Marx also, human consciousness in a particular society cannot be taken straightforwardly as an illumination of its social truth. Consciousness for Marx is an outward and instrumental expression of the relations of production prevailing in class-based societies, masking the realities of exploitation in the interests of the dominant class. This becomes especially clear at times of revolution and historical transformation.

*Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between social forces of production and the relations of production.[[18]](#footnote-18)*

Consciousness then does not determine social structure; rather social structure determines consciousness. In Marx’s account this is something that characterises all hitherto existing and contemporary societies. Only in the communist society will this become reversed, as humankind leaves behind the ‘realm of necessity’ and enters the ‘realm of freedom’. In that liberated state humans will consciously make their own arrangements for life and productive activity, all in full and free mastery of their social relationships. Only then will human consciousness be transparent to the truth of social reality.

Erich Fromm claimed there was a ‘common soil’ from which Marx’s and Freud’s different theorisations had grown:

*These fundamental ideas can best be expressed in three short statements, two of them Roman, one Christian. These statements are: 1)* De omnibus es dubitandum *(Of all one must doubt). 2)* Nihil humanum a mihi alienumputo *(I believe nothing human to be alien to me). 3)* The truth shall make you free*.*[[19]](#footnote-19)

And commenting further

*… they both had the same implacable distrust of the clichés, ideas, rationalizations, and ideologies which fill people’s minds and which form the basis of what they mistake for reality.*[[20]](#footnote-20)

This experience of reading Marx and Freud alongside of one another does emerge from something real in their published works. Both regarded themselves as establishing a ‘new science’ of humanity, in the process overturning established preconceptions and ideological mystifications that concealed reality. For both also, going rigorously to the ‘root of things’, stripping away layers of obfuscation and identifying ‘ultimate origins’ of their respective fields were of over-riding importance.

Beyond these broad generalities there are some apparent similarities in Marx’s and Freud’s respective approaches to their very different fields of interest, that at the surface at least seem to be substantive. So, ahead of a critical discussion of these, we shall duly consider the question of a plausible compatibility between them.

**Figures of the ‘late Enlightenment’**

Marx (1818-1883) and Freud (1856-1939) were contemporaries. Their lives overlapped by 27 years. When Marx died, Freud was a young scientist establishing himself in his first field: neuropathology. There were some overlaps in their German intellectual heritages. Marx famously developed his early thinking through his critical immersion in Hegelian philosophy. Freud did not read Hegel, although there is an argument that a link between Hegel and Freud exists in their uses of the concept of ‘desire’.[[21]](#footnote-21) Particularly in Hegel’s 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* ‘desire’ features as a central organising category for the dialectic of apperception and self-consciousness; being in fact treated as identical with self-consciousness. As Hegel puts it “self-consciousness is desire in general”.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Freud did read Kant and referred to him frequently throughout his writings. Late in life he came to the gloomy philosophy of Schopenhauer. In Schopenhauer’s irrational Will and its mental representations (‘Vorstellung’), to which the mind is slave, he found a precursor to his own construct of the id. Both Marx and Freud were familiar with the German Romantic tradition. Marx was on personal-familial terms with the poet Heinrich Heine, enjoying for many years a close friendship with him. Freud too, was a great appreciator of the works of Heine. Above all however, both placed their lifeworks in the ‘scientific age’.

On the matter of the cultural status of their works, Marx and Freud can indeed be seen as ‘late representatives’ of the European Enlightenment. For both also, their endeavours pushed at the limits of the established – bourgeoise – theories and sensibilities of their day: Marx overturning the fields of historical, economic and political science entirely; Freud creating a new terrain of psychoanalytical theory and therapeutic technique.

For Freud psychoanalysis was central to the rationalism of the modern age.

*… intellect and mind are objects for scientific research in exactly the same way as any non-human things. Psychoanalysis has a special right to speak for the scientific* Weltanschauung *at this point, since it cannot be reproached with having neglected what is mental in the picture of the universe.*[[23]](#footnote-23)

For Marx and Engels, their historical materialism was shaped by the notion of a ‘unified science’, and the emergence of humanity from nature.

*We know only a single science, the science of history. One can look at history from two sides and divide it into the history of nature and the history of men. The two sides are, however, inseparable; the history of nature and the history of men are dependent on each other so long as men exist.*[[24]](#footnote-24)

So, for both Marx and Freud humanity did not stand apart from nature, but rather came from it. The ‘science of humanity’ then could not be properly understood separately from the science of the natural world. ‘History’ and ‘natural history’, were ultimately one; and would become increasingly a part of one another in an ever more complete body of knowledge.

As a corollary to these science-centred views, religion provided both a target of critique and even attack and also puzzle to be solved, considering the grip that it held on the mental landscape of the great majority of humankind. Indeed, at one level Marx and Freud say quite similar things about religious worship. In the works of both, the individual is subject to painful social realities: for Marx arising from the alienations with which life within class-based society is permeated; for Freud arising from the repression of otherwise untrammelled desire under the stern authority of the super-ego. For each also the individual finds refuge in fantasy, in the imagination of a realm of deities and poly- and mono-theistic beliefs. Religion for both is a salve that eases the pain of the lives to which human beings are fated.

The future of an illusion

**Alienation and the conceit of the ‘self’**

There are apparent similarities too in Marx’s and Freud’s views of the ostensible autonomy of the person. Freud had considered the conscious self, the self-aware ego, in dynamic relationship between a powerful but wordless id that influences, pushes and moulds it, and an equally powerful super-ego that holds it in check as the person navigates a hostile and dangerous reality. The notion the ego has of itself, as making choices, having agency, and so on, is an illusion. So, we follow rather than make our fate; we are slaves to interior forces that are hidden to us. For Marx, the notion of an isolated self, a sort of imaginary Robinson Crusoe figure that inhabited the ‘bourgeoise economics’ of his day, was a fantasy. Whatever thought the person has of their rational, independent self-commanding identity is based upon a fallacy. As with Freud, the self is shaped by unseen influences; though for Marx, these did not come from a psychical interior. Rather they were the result of social structures, exterior processes and historical forces.

In his early writings Marx had coined the term ‘character-mask’,[[25]](#footnote-25) taken from Greek tragedy, to express the ways in which historical and social persons come to represent or embody larger forces than themselves. He also applied to term to corporate bodies, professional associations and political parties. The meaning however was the same for each case; that human action was mediated by ideas that hid the true – *i.e.* self-serving, interest-based – nature of human motivations; so, as for Freud, the self being opaque to itself. The concept appears in Marx’s analysis of the shifting class alliances of the 1848 revolution in France. Marx explains the concept briefly, alluding to Hegel’s comment that ‘all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice’. ‘The mask’, assumed in the historical moment, is used to make sense of events with reference to the past.

*Thus Luther put on the mask of the Apostle Paul, the Revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately in the guise of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the Revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793-95.*[[26]](#footnote-26)

Further on, commenting upon the ascension of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to become emperor of France, Marx uses the idea to explain what made it possible “for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero’s part.” In acts of public deception and private self-delusion, political actors don the masks of previous historical sagas, to make sense of their own contemporaneous dramas.

Marx’s understanding of ideology is also centred upon the hiding of true interests behind obfuscating mental constructs. ‘Character-mask’ was later, particularly in the hands of Frederick Engels, to become the concept of ‘false-consciousness’ by which rationalisations of action and behaviour disguise its real meaning.

The theme of opacity, the hiding of real motivations and venal interests by the self from itself, is linked to another major theme for both Freud and Marx: that of ‘alienation’. In fact, the explicit term ‘alienation’ appears hardly at all in Freud’s work. However, the concept is recognisable in Freud’s central theoretical formulations. It is present for instance in his discussion of the oppressive character of sexual norms as a cause of nervous illness in his 1908 essay *Civilised’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness.* The demand that everyone should obey the same ‘conduct of sexual life’ was for Freud an ‘injustice’ and a cause of widespread unhappiness both within beyond the conventional, monogamous, and hetero-sexualised family.

Another example of ‘alienation’ in Freud’s work lies in the tensions between parts of the intra-psychical structure; principally caused by the control of the id by the super-ego *via* the ego (acting “in obedience to its orders” [[27]](#footnote-27)). For the person this is felt in necessary internal tensions – a ‘tendency to conflict’ - caused by the work of the ego pushing down upon libidinal desires. Talking of the causes of neuroses Freud says:

*First there is the most general precondition – frustration; next, fixation of the libido which forces it into particular directions; and thirdly, the tendency to conflict, arising from the development of the ego, which rejects these libidinal impulses.*[[28]](#footnote-28)

Moreover, where we see the id representing a primordial nature, reigned in and mastered by a cultural super-ego, we see also the negating of urges and basic instincts by the repressive mechanisms of the psyche to the detriment of self-understanding. These processes, involving structural tension, antagonism, and repression, also render the ‘authentic self’ opaque to the ‘conscious self’. In *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930) Freud develops this theme in relation to his libido-theory, now structured by a bifurcation between a life-instinct and a death-instinct. The aggressive drives of the death instinct must be controlled by a dominant super-ego working through a personal ego that it harries and chastises to achieve its goal; the repression of otherwise untrammelled and destructive desires. The result is dissatisfaction, anxiety, guilt, and discontent. As a result, the person cannot fully know themselves. We will return to the id, ego and super-ego triad in a more detailed discussion of Freud’s theory of mind.

For Marx ‘alienation’ is an explicit, indeed a foundational category. It was a central part of his intellectual struggle with the influence of the great figure of German speculative philosophy, Georg Hegel, that was still driving philosophical controversies amongst political radicals by the 1840s. For Hegel human consciousness was unable to know itself without the attainment of an ‘absolute knowledge’, a total apprehension of the world; and so, without having reached this final state, was destined to be estranged from itself. This notion of an estrangement that lies within the human being, was taken by Marx and turned into one of a social relationship. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx formulates alienation as that of the worker from their labour power and also the product of their labour.

*So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital.*[[29]](#footnote-29)

So, the worker’s labour power and labour product are overtaken by the capitalist, who returns wages in the name of ‘equal exchange’. The product, now the property of the capitalist, is hidden from the worker as something that they have created. So also is their relationship with their own labour, and indeed that to their fellow workers, as the source of their own essential self, of their humanity. The true relationships that organise their social existence are obscured; all is opaque. They are lost to themselves. We will come back to the concept of alienation later in our discussion of Marx’s theory of ideology.

**Method in Freud and Marx**

Finally, there is the question of ‘method’ as a possible area of overlap between Marx and Freud. As is well known, Marx’s youthful intellectual development was through a critique of Hegelian philosophy. What Marx took positively from Hegel was that reality is dialectical in character; that it moves through moments of opposing forces, tensions and contradictions that become resolved into new unities *via* changes in material quality. Freud’s work does not generally conform to this description. Freud’s early foundational conceptualisations, associated with his economic model of psychical processes particularly, are informed by notions of mechanistic force, energy quanta, and hydraulic metaphors. In later work, Freud’s use of symbolism and mental representation remained reliant upon the id as an organic force operating beneath outward social behaviour. And in his attempts to raise psychoanalytical insights to the level of society and human history - his metapsychology – he appealed to vitalism and abstract cosmological notions.

However, there are some areas of Freud’s thinking that are quite dialectical in their substantive meaning, if not their explicit articulation. In his early discussion of dreams for example, elements drawn from life-themes and banal details of daily life making up the dream’s ‘latent content’, become the ‘manifest dream’ that we experience. The processes are those of ‘displacement’ and ‘condensation’, fracture and reformation, disaggregation and symbolic re-assemblage. Freud’s descriptions here often come close to what we can recognise as dialectical. Also, in Freud’s cathexis-theory libidinal energy moves from basic drives and urges that aim to satisfy sexual and other needs, to higher order value-based outlets associated with morality and culture. These processes involve ‘sublimations’ that create qualitative changes in psychical states and outward social behaviours.

*The historians of civilization seem to be unanimous in the opinion that such deflection of sexual motive powers from sexual aims, a process which merits the name of sublimation, has furnished powerful components for all cultural accomplishments.*[[30]](#footnote-30)

And in Freud’s discussion of ‘Trieb’ (drive) theory in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) we read that drives can turn back upon the self, become their opposites, and become sublimated into representational symbolic forms or repressed from conscious life. Again, Freud’s accounts suggest principles that remind us of dialectical categories.

A second and related methodological similarity between Marx and Freud just alluded to, is that of the notion of a ‘scale of value’, with the ‘higher’ orders *i.e.* more developed, more refined, more cultural, more moral *etc.*, being rooted in the ‘lower’ orders of all of these aspects of any given area of life. So, for Marx the most exalted cultural creations may be seen as expressions of, and ideological coverings for class-based interest; and for Freud the achievements of the person in creative, commercial and romantic life are ultimately made possible by the sublimations of basic sexual drives into the strivings of the super-ego.[[31]](#footnote-31)

**Materialism in Freud and Marx**

1. *Materialism as method*

The philosophical materialism that describes all of reality as ‘matter-in-motion’ can only be a basic starting point in our comparison of the logics of Marx and Freud. For although both were indeed philosophical materialists, their ‘materialisms’ were different. Here we approach materialism in another sense: that of materialism as ‘method’ in the explanation of human activity. Materialism as a way of understanding the behaviour of the human being in its social environment is in fact a point of divergence between Marxism and psychoanalysis; that is *generally* - and with exceptions.

Freud’s ‘libido’ and connected with it his notion of ‘cathexis’ by which psychic energy becomes channelled towards a specific object, idea or attachment, are material phenomena. They arise from bodily organic forces as quantised energy transmissions *via* neuro-mechanical processes. Freud’s metaphors used to explain his libido-cathexis model, are coloured by the dominant scientific metaphors of his day. The imagery that runs through many of Freud’s early works is by turns hydraulic, electrical or influenced by the steam-driven technologies of his time; each suggesting mechanisms by which basic impulses exert their force upon consciousness, and therefore personal behaviour.[[32]](#footnote-32) The key concepts then, in the economic model that Freud continued to develop from the 1890s over more than two decades included: energy transformation; drives for the satisfaction of desire; the object-orientation of desire (cathexis); and the channelling of psycho-sexual energy into all areas of life (libido).

To illustrate with some recurring tropes in Freud’s conceptualisations on this topic, libido: can be ‘dammed up’ by the frustration caused by the absence of outlets;[[33]](#footnote-33) forms a ‘reservoir’ within both the ego[[34]](#footnote-34) and the id;[[35]](#footnote-35) is ‘discharged’ by action towards an object of desire (or by neurotic behaviours);[[36]](#footnote-36) and can even ‘flow’ backwards to create masculine tendencies in women.[[37]](#footnote-37) A consequence of these metaphors is a tendency to interpret higher human functions principally as the effects of impersonal and unconscious material forces within the person.

Marx’s *historical* materialism is different to the monist reduction of all things to matter and its motion. Marx was a philosophical materialist, of course. It was the subject of his doctoral thesis; a meditation upon determinism in the materialisms of Democritus and Epicurus. However, for Marx explaining human behaviour - conscious and unconscious – as we have seen means starting with social structure. And here we must distinguish materialism from its opposite for this purpose: idealism.

We are not concerned here with idealism in its empirical, transcendental and absolute forms.[[38]](#footnote-38) These metaphysical forms of idealism refer to the relationship between the mind and reality, abstractly understood. Instead, our interest is the relationship between ideas and the social world and also the nature of the mind in its historical setting. So, by ‘idealist’ for this purpose, we mean two things: i. that it is possible to explain personal (particular) behaviour by beginning with the consciousness of the individual; and ii. that it is possible to explain social (general) behaviour by invoking trans-historical mythic narratives. Freud, across each of his models of the human mind, holds to both positions. Marx, as we have also seen, holds to neither. Freud’s position then, based upon this – *social* - definition is in fact idealist at its core; and Marx’s, materialist.

To be fair to Freud, we will not leave this question just there. Sometimes Freud is paradoxical on this question; and there are *tendencies* in his interpretative framing of the human psyche that are indeed socially materialist. In his theory of the Oedipus complex, Freud had mapped out the psycho-sexual drama of the child’s development, as they struggled to compete with the father for the mother’s affections; a drama that would lay out their sexual destiny. In fact the fateful implications of the Oedipus complex are entirely the result of dense and tortured intra-psychical and inter-psychical struggles occurring within a social structure: the family. To be more precise, we should say the bourgeois Viennese family of the opening decades of the 20th Century. Still, a social structure nonetheless. However, Freud analytically privileges the family over other kinds of structure, and so the social materialism he invokes is partial, and distorted by his isolating of the family from the wider social matrix which gives rise to it, and in which it is enmeshed.

There is a little more to say on this point. In Freud’s clinical cases the family stories of his analysands are frequently crossed by forces that enter the family dynamic from the outside. In the early case of Dora[[39]](#footnote-39) for example, Freud’s analysis encompasses an interaction of *two* social units; one, Dora’s own family dominated by a cold and loveless marriage; the other, the couple Herr K and Frau K who are friends of Dora’s parents. Whilst her father and Frau K are sexually involved, Herr K has made repeated advances upon Dora. Dora’s father, in tacit and complicit understanding with Herr K, chooses not to believe Dora when she turns to him for help, so leading to her desperate unhappiness and social withdrawal. It is the transactional status of Dora in this horrible dynamic that is the root of her symptomology, and not *simply* ‘jealousy of the father’. Freud’s analysis then, displays a further social materialist tendency in the behavioural-cultural context in which the family exists; in this case with all of its poisonous concealment and hypocrisy.

1. *Materialism as practice*

A second difference between Freud and Marx on the question of materialism is that of its meaning as practice. The practice associated with Marx’s critique of class society arises from the struggle to overthrow it, so establishing a new era of classless communism. Marxist practice is primarily an endeavour to change reality itself; a ‘reality’ of course that is independent of the mind, and that will stubbornly resist human consciousness where that is at odds with it. In this sense Marxist ‘practice’ generally is materialist in the social meaning of the term outlined above. It seeks to alter the material world by critical and practical engagement with it.

The practice of psychoanalysis is that of individual therapy, revolving around the relationship between the therapist (analyst) and the patient (analysand). The set-up and layout of the therapy room, complete with the analysand’s couch and back-turned analysist’s chair, captures something of the structural isolation of the therapeutic encounter from the society outside. However, it is the underlying logic of the psychoanalytic approach to the patient’s malaise that is important. Whilst there are tendencies within Freud’s cases to acknowledge larger social factors influencing behaviour over and above the internalisation of basic family dynamics, these are no more that observational case-notes. They are not integrated into his theoretical edifice.

Freud’s technique is to bring the intra-psychical traumas of early life to the surface of consciousness, and to resolve the personal and emotional anguish they have caused. The concern then is to manage the patient’s pain; it is not primarily to critique the bourgeois family structure itself as the cause of that pain, and it is certainly not to propose an alternative. So classical psychoanalysis above all a symptomology; or more precisely a programmatic approach to the amelioration of painful symptoms and the restoration of mental equilibrium and social function. Its measure of success is the effective regulation of the life of the patient, and their return to the conventions of normal routine. It is not the transformation of the social world; neither that of the individual, nor of the whole of society. In this sense Freud’s practice, and that of psychoanalysis more generally, is not materialist. Insofar as Freud’s therapeutic method deals with the ideational material of repressed trauma without any larger project of social transformation it is idealist in its outward practical aspects.

So, because Freud’s psychoanalysis does not carry the intention of an overthrow of the bourgeois family structure as the cause of individual pain and malfunction, and certainly not the larger social matrix of which it is one element, its conceptualisations and deeper logic are isomorphic with the oppressive structures that give rise to the symptoms it seeks to ameliorate. At best it is an anodyne to the suffering of the powerless individual struggling to survive in an unforgiving and conflict-ridden emotional landscape. At worst it conspires with the oppressive social structures that are the cause of the patient’s anguish, to return them to the social mainstream, able now to once more take up and maintain their proper place within it.[[40]](#footnote-40)

None of these sceptical observations are intended to gainsay the humanism of the first wave of psychoanalysis in its heroic early phase. Indeed, beginning with Freud himself, and continuing through the work of the major psychoanalytical figures of the 1920s and 1930s, a deep engagement with the human condition, and by extension with emancipation from the emotional shackles of bourgeois moralism, was evident. One figure who remained particularly loyal to Freud’s legacy on this question was Geza Roheim, who searched for a pre-modern liberated sexual state amongst the Aboriginal Arrernte and Pitjantjatjara of Central Australia. For Roheim, this represented the polar opposite of the repressed bourgeois family, the root of all neuroses.[[41]](#footnote-41) The political commitment of many psychoanalysts of the 1920s and 1930s also was especially pronounced at the Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute,[[42]](#footnote-42) founded in 1920. Its leading figures mixed Freud’s theories with social democratic, revolutionary Marxist or anarchist ideas. However, the political radicalism of many of the early pioneers did not undo the essentially conservative logic of their therapeutic practice.

After the Second World War, many of the key names in psychoanalysis who had fled the Nazi terror, now found they had a new cultural audience, as well as a market for therapy, in the US. These figures, anxious of their relatively insecure émigré status, were often nervous of their former associations with political radicalism, and particularly Marxism, and either separated their personal politics entirely from their therapeutic practice, or even jettisoned them completely. Psychoanalysis would also be taken up by the North American medical establishment, feeding into various types of programmatic patient treatment, though shorn of any larger social critique. Through the 1950s and 1960s psychoanalysis was to lose entirely its previous political character. It became increasingly a fashionable, and often expensive palliative for the neuroses of the North American middle and upper classes.[[43]](#footnote-43) Finally we should note here capitalist interest in - and abuse of - psychological theory and technique in the service of consumer behaviour, political manipulation, and social control.[[44]](#footnote-44)

**The architects of integration**

Theorised integrations have been constructed from these kinds of supposed commonality and resonance. For Otto Fenichel this was *via* the ‘unconscious enthusiasms’ that underpin conscious strivings. For Wilhelm Reich it was the role of sexual repression in economic exploitation that was key. For Siegfried Bernfeld the psycho-sexual development within the family was central to understanding the education system under capitalism. For Erich Fromm the abandonment of independent autonomy of the self was central to conformism within an oppressive class-based capitalist society.

At points during the histories of Marxism and psychoanalysis there has also been political cross-fertilisation between the two traditions. There have been figures in the socialist movement for instance who have paid attention to psychoanalysis, treating its central concepts with intellectual respect, even if cautiously so. Of these, the most notable is Leon Trotsky, for whom psychoanalysis, although not established in its scientific status, nonetheless represented a rich seam of plausible hypotheses that ought not be dismissed on purely doctrinal grounds.[[45]](#footnote-45) And across the historical gallery of prominent names in psychoanalysis there have been many who allied themselves with left Social Democracy or stood in the camp of revolutionary socialism. Wilhelm Reich, Paul Federn, Siegfried Bernfeld, Otto Fenichel, Bruno Bettelheim for example, and others identified themselves as Marxists of one stripe or another.[[46]](#footnote-46)

The overlaps and affinities traced here however, are more apparent than real. When carefully excavated we discover always that what appears to be a sameness between Marx’s and Freud’s treatment of a topic at the surface of things, in fact at a deeper level are incompatible. We will trace the major themes upon which Marx and Freud differ; themes that run to the core of their works and that must be considered as definitive of each, leaving their assessments of humankind ultimately incommensurable.[[47]](#footnote-47)

## The incommensurable logics of Freud and Marx

**The logic of Freud; the logic of Marx**

In his 1926 Marxist critique of Freudianism, Valentin Vološinov characterised psychoanalysis as a species of ‘subjectivist psychology’ along with others based upon vitalist principles such as the *élan vital* of Henri Bergson, or the Will of Arthur Schopenhauer. No such thing as ‘the id’ he argued, or indeed the individual, could exist outside of society. Rather, what Freud termed the ‘unconscious’ was no more than the projection of *social* experience into the person’s psyche; the contents of the psyche then being drawn from the objective world of the person, but then treated as subjective in the processes of psychoanalytical therapy. What was ‘revealed’ in the therapist-patient encounter, through the patients’ speech-utterances’ – the only material for analysis – was actually the *ideology* of their behaviour, as they reported it in the therapy session. Vološinov rejected the very existence and idea of Freud’s ‘unconscious’, acknowledging only an ‘unofficial consciousness’ that is authentic to our personal experience, as distinct from an ‘official consciousness’ that is infused with ideology and that shapes our normal behaviour.[[48]](#footnote-48)

The ideas of Marx and of Freud are dissimilar at a fundamental level in fact; and the theoretical categories that form the foundation stones to their philosophies are radically different from one another. This is clear in their respective understandings of the relationship between appearance and reality.

For Freud, whilst our conscious apprehension of the world is shrouded in the *post-hoc* rationalisations and dissimulations by which the ego protects itself from early life traumas, so too is our inner world blocked from our understanding. The id particularly, despite the instinctual drives that originate in it, is unknowable to us in a direct sense. Freud insists there is a radical divide between the self that we experience as ourselves, and the psychical substratum that underlies it, that is inaccessible to our consciousness. They are separate realms. Freud’s conceptualisations here are dualistic.

For Marx on the other hand ideology is used by a ruling class to mask its real material interests. Such concealing ideologies are propagated through organised religion, the media, the education system and so on. It is crucial to note there that ideology cannot eclipse reality, but only distort it in the minds of the exploited and oppressed (and indeed the exploiters and oppressors). Consciousness in Marx’s view does not exist in an experiential vacuum. Rather it interacts with experience of the social world in the life of the person. In other words, within consciousness there is not an absolute divide between perceptions of the world itself and the ideas by which the person apprehends it. Marx’s conceptualisation is not dualistic; it is dialectical.

This difference of logics between Freud and Marx was important also for their assessments of the potential for liberation. For Freud, therapeutic treatments of neuroses that were rooted life-traumas, could achieve a degree of relative emotional equilibrium for the person. This could be done by bringing to the surface the sediment of repressed psychical material that had been pushed down into the unconscious, revealing to the patient the source of their distress. Freud’s technique was ‘archaeological’ in character.

*As a rule the physician cannot spare the patient this phase of the treatment; he must necessarily make him re-experience a certain portion of his past life, and must see to it that he remains to some degree above it all so that he remains cognizant at every turn that what appears to be reality is in truth the refracted image of a forgotten past. If the physician manages to achieve this, then the battle is won; the patients accepts the validity of the interpretation, and the therapy – which wholly depends on this acceptance – can be successfully concluded.*[[49]](#footnote-49)

For Marx however, liberation happens only by engagement with the world the person inhabits, and ultimately by changing the world itself. The ideological filters that obfuscate reality are shed in a process of thoroughgoing change – of the social environment and of the person. The oppressive structures of the mind and of society, normally inter-dependent in non-revolutionary historical periods, are overcome together in a process of mutually reinforcing transformation. Differently from the Freudian notion then of neurotic complexes that are revealed to the individual as objects for analysis, Marx’s view of liberation is that of personal and collective change through social revolution.[[50]](#footnote-50)

*… this revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew.*[[51]](#footnote-51)

The logics of Freud and Marx are also different in what we can call their ‘directionality’. For Freud, the analytical starting point is the interior realm of the person: the psyche. In its ‘topographical’ aspect this refers to the structured layering of the unconscious, the preconscious and conscious self; in its ‘structural’ aspect it refers to the id (the realm of pleasure-seeking drives), the ego (the self-aware person), and the super-ego (the realm of morality and higher strivings). From this individualised theoretical standpoint Freud would, in his later works move outwards from this position to explain aspects of the social world and of human history.

Marx’s logic moves in the opposite direction; from ‘social totality’ to the person as a product of society and history. It is not that the person has no independent existence; merely an epiphenomenon of social processes or larger historical forces. Intra-personal processes are real, as is ‘personality’ and individual identity. However, the ‘person’ is a term without meaning unless understood as a part of society, an element of a complex social whole; and its result. For Marx then, there is no abstract individual, separate from society; the person is born into a social structure through which they grow and develop into their future self. The ‘individual’ then, is always a ‘social individual’.

**The Individual and society**

Freud has an ‘atomistic’ perspective on relationship between the individual and their society. The individual is the monadic building block of society; society being the sum of its individualised parts. More than this, these individuals do not by themselves coalesce. Left to their own devices they would devour one another with material self-interest, selfish pleasure, conquest and destruction. In Hobbesian style, a social order is needed to curb purely self-oriented motivations and behaviour. This it does through the injunctions of self-control and neighbourly decency *via* the super-ego. Civilisation for Freud requires repression.

*We realized that the difficulty of childhood lies in the fact that in a short span of time a child had to appropriate the results of a cultural evolution which stretches over thousands of years, including the acquisition of control over his instincts and adaptation to society – or at least the first beginnings of these two. He can only achieve a part of this modification through his own development; much must be imposed on him by education.*[[52]](#footnote-52)

Freud’s theorisations of human behaviour can be seen as a radicalisation of the notion of ‘the individual’ – the crucial pivot of classical nineteenth century liberal thought. However, where John Stuart Mill brought the idea of ‘the individual’ from being that of an isolated logical construct, to having a central place in his idea of industrial democracy, Freud went into the interior. [[53]](#footnote-53) Both then, in their quite different ways, took individualism to its logical end points: for Mill to the end of individualism *per se* in socialism; for Freud to the depths of the individual psyche and its basal structure. [[54]](#footnote-54)

On this question Marx’s is again different. For Marx, society has a reality that stands over-and-above the aggregate of individuals that comprise its population. It is greater than the sum of its parts. Of course, there is conflict. However, this is the result of the intrinsic qualities of the social structure itself: its class-based nature; the economic exploitation that lies at its heart; the ways in which it pits individual against individual in competition for employment and the resources needed to sustain human existence. These antagonisms are the creation of the social structure itself. For Marx, the starting point is always the social whole, of which the individual is a part and upon which they necessarily depend; the notion of an *a*social individual, primeval or otherwise, no more than a fantastic imagining of bourgeois ideology. According to Marx, such a being could never have existed.

*The more deeply we go back into history, the more does the individual, and hence also the producing individual, appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole: in a still quite natural way in the family and in the family expanded into the clan; then later in the various forms of communal society arising out of the antitheses and fusions of clans.*[[55]](#footnote-55)

So, whereas for Freud the individual and society are forever and universally counterposed, for Marx they are not. For Marx the type of society in which the individual is economically exploited, socially oppressed, and feels their alienation, is historically specific. The antagonistic relationships that characterise a society are necessary to it only; they are not universal features of human organisation. On this basis, it is possible to imagine a quite different type of society that fosters the free development of the full capacities and potentialities of the person. In this circumstance, one that is different from our own social experience under capitalism, the individual grows and flourishes not as an isolate, separate from all others, but rather now as the creation of a liberated society; and as a ‘social individual’ working with others towards their mutual benefit and fulfilment. Such a perspective is inconceivable within the anthropological pessimism of the Freudian paradigm.

**Historical time**

Freud and Marx differ also on the matter of our relationship with historical time. Belonging to Freud’s unconscious, the id (of which more later) is the domain of biophysical urges. It straddles human history and pre-history, as well as traversing across different cultures. It is in this sense, timeless. So, whereas the super-ego is formed within, and operates through culture, and whereas the ego negotiates the world as a self-conscious existent in a concrete – and time-bound – social context, the id knows nothing of history, of past and future. It is concerned only ever with its present desires; and such a state means that time has no meaning for it at all.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Psychoanalysis however does require a notion of time; biographical time that is. For Freud our fate lies in our past; the buried and fixed trauma-related complexes that have been pushed down and locked into a hidden recess. Liberation from their depressive influence involves revealing them to the patient through therapy. The repressed material hidden in our unconscious exists as a dead-weight, preventing us from achieving personal freedom. Our only salvation lies in release from its chains through therapeutic analysis.

For Marx, history is of central philosophical importance. We are products not of our personal history, primarily, but of our epochal history. We have seen that ‘the person’, in their sentiments of individuality, in their sense of having the capacity for decision-making and in their mentality are in fact the result of the totality of the social effects constitutive of their point in history, and of the large scale social and economic processes of preceding decades and centuries. However more to the point, our understanding of our own history requires us to change our present as we orient towards our future. The contradictions of our social present have emerged from history; and we live, struggle and strive in and through these contradictions. Our social present also contains the potential of a future that is made possible by the stage of economic, social and cultural development to which history has brought us. We can realise this potential only by overthrowing our social present in revolution. As we do so, the past becomes revealed to us as old outlooks are shed, ideological distortions removed, and consciousness changed. Georg Hegel expressed this idea in the evocative line that impressed the young Marx, “The Owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of dusk”.[[57]](#footnote-57) For Marx, our relationship with time is not static; it is one of transformation and historical transcendence.

There is no common ground between Freud and Marx regarding interpretations of early human history. Freud’s attempts to apply his psychical theory to human history became what he called his metapsychology. In his *Totem and Taboo* (1913),[[58]](#footnote-58) applying a biogenetic principle taken from the German zoologist and embryologist, Ernst Haeckel, that ‘ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny’, Freud surmised that the symptomology of neurosis essentially re-ran humanity’s major developmental stages. Working outwards from the inner dynamics of the psyche, Freud theorised that the overthrow of the authority of the father that - important for the emergence of the properly regulated and socially successful mature person - has its roots in an early human saga. He postulated a ‘primal horde’ comprising a lordly father, ruling over his sons and the women of the tribe. These jealous sons killed and ate their father, so establishing a ritual of inheritance, social power and sexual entitlement. Reflecting upon the how social morality might have been rooted in an original barbaric act, Freud says:

*By basing our argument upon the celebration of the totem we are in a position to give an answer: One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority. Of course these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind’s first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion. [[59]](#footnote-59)*

Freud meant this literally, as an event that had happened (probably many times), and that had created the generationally recurring battles of childhood development, adolescence, and maturation in the individual, and given rise to religious totems that come to symbolise this founding drama. He would later apply this saga in his attempts to explain the rise of monotheism by rooting it in the historical exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt after the death of the pharaoh [Akhenaten](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akhenaten) in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

In Marx there is no such saga, whether meant literally or as myth; although there are indeed distinct stages of human history rooted in the level and type of economic and technical development particular to each. Each ‘mode of production’ engenders its own special cultures, beliefs and types of rationality. The forms of consciousness that predominate in a given society reflect the economic relations that provide its basic structure. According to Marxist anthropology also, during early human development - in complete contrast with Freud’s sexualised and masculinist blood-rite – it is the human manipulation of nature and the codetermining evolution of ‘hand and brain’ that produce the material basis of primitive (and *matrilineal*) societies. Here technique and human labour upon the natural world are the key to understanding culture and human behaviour. In his 1876 essay ‘The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man’, Engels explained the evolutionary dialectic involved:

*By the combined functioning of hand, speech organs and brain, not only in each individual but also in society, men became capable of executing more and more complicated operations, and were able to set themselves, and achieve, higher and higher aims.*[[60]](#footnote-60)

**Human nature**

When we talk of ‘human nature’ we have in mind the full gamut of behaviour in its inter-personal, group and social aspects. From the mundane interactions of people in daily life, sexual coupling, and petty ritual to economic behaviour, religious devotion and warfare at the larger social and historical scale. As we have seen, considering the spectrum of human activity at all scales, the directional logics of Freud and Marx are opposed: Freud beginning with the intra-psychical workings of the single mind, working outwards to society; Marx taking the ‘social totality’ as his starting point.

Freud’s thinking evolved across several phases of development and amendment of his modelling of ‘psychical structure’. Beginning with the Freudian id, this is a dark realm of basic demands, impenetrable to direct conscious apprehension. It is the root source of the instincts or ‘drives’; the person’s most basic – and base - desires, that press relentlessly and insistently upon the body. In his early works Freud described the drives as belonging to two broad areas that are universal to life: self-preservation; and reproduction. In *The Instincts and their* *Vicissitudes* (1915) Freud locates the self-preservation instinct in the ego; that part of us which contends with external reality, with the world. The reproductive instinct, the sex-drive, he locates within the unconscious. Each of these split and differentiate into second-order principles with their own consequences for psychological type and social behaviour.

However, the drives (instincts[[61]](#footnote-61)) involved are not experienced directly. They are also complex, each comprising four parts. The instinct begins in the unconscious as a ‘pressure’, the basic demand for satisfaction. The ‘aim’ of the instinct is the satisfaction of the demand, and its means. The instinct will become fixed upon an ‘object’, whether in the world or in the body, to achieve its aim. And the ‘source’ of the instinct is how we experience it by the mental representations it creates, and in the organs that it stimulates.

Now, moving away from the biologism of his earlier work, Freud sees the ‘drive’ as a predominantly cultural factor existing at the interface between organic impulses and symbolic representation.

*The instinct appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body.*[[62]](#footnote-62)

In his 1920 work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud altered his drive theory once more – and radically. The libido, the instinct for life (Eros) - differentiated into the sex-drive, the nurturing instinct, and the quest for personal affiliation - was now binarized with an opposing instinct: the instinct towards death (Thanatos) - differentiated into aggression, self-denial, and the urge to destroy. The equilibrating logic of this dual-instinct model was preserved in the tendency of the death-instinct to always bring the activity and achievements made possible by the energy of the life-instincts, back to a nullity; to a final stasis.[[63]](#footnote-63)

Belonging to the death instinct, and governing the interactions between the different active elements of Freud’s instincts theory, is the Nirvana principle (also known as the constancy principle). This drives an essentially homeostatic mechanism that seeks always a balance of demand and satisfaction. Where demand is unmet, the consequence is need and striving towards the object that will satisfy that need, so restoring balance once more. The attainment of equilibrium then, is what satisfies the person in their life; their source of pleasure.

*However this may be, we must perceive that the Nirvana principle, belonging as it does to the death instinct, has undergone a modification in living organisms through which it has become the pleasure principle; and we shall henceforward avoid regarding the two principles as one. It is not difficult, if we care to follow up this line of thought, to guess what power was the source of the modification. It can only be the life instinct, the libido, which has thus, alongside of the death instinct, seized upon a share in the regulation of the processes of life. In this way we obtain a small but interesting set of connections. The Nirvana principle expresses the trend of the death instinct; the pleasure principle represents the demands of the libido; and the modification of the latter principle, the reality principle, represents the influence of the external world.*[[64]](#footnote-64)

Freud gave the fullest account of his psychical model and human behaviour in his 1923 publication *The Ego and the Id*. The tripartite arrangement of the id, the ego and the superego is present as before. However, Freud introduces further complexity into his psychical model. Its dynamics are shaped by tensions between: the id and the ego; the ego and the superego; and the life and death instincts.

It is Freud’s altered view of the ego however, and its relation to the unconscious that is of most consequence. Freud now notes that the ego has its own type of unconscious. This results from its dealings with a difficult and hostile world, and from the pressures of the superego. It is the product of repression, as the ego hides difficult experiences and painful memories from itself. The repressed material within the ego Freud now describes as the ‘preconscious’, to distinguish it from the unconscious in which the id is located. Moreover, the ego, as the part that deals with external reality, is an organ of perception whilst also being connected to the id and its demands. This means that the visual aspects of the ego’s repressed mental content are significant for psychoanalysis, as are the word-associations that identify them and by which they can be brought out of the pre-conscious and into consciousness in therapy. Furthermore, the ego as an organ that perceives external reality, projects itself onto the body, identifying itself with the entire person in their world.

And the ego is now also the site of the formation of the superego, as objects of desire that it loses in reality, become internalised as ideal-objects within an ‘ego-ideal’ that precipitates from it; again the result of the repression. This psychical mechanism is also for Freud, the explanation now of gendering processes in the infant, and operates at the root of the Oedipus complex.

Throughout the various phases of Freud’s modelling of his instinct theory and in each of his formulations, the origins of the instincts, located in the id, cannot be understood in an obvious way; they are prelingual, and so cannot be expressed straightforwardly in language. Rather, we know them indirectly through their somatic effects as ‘pressures’, and by the impressions they produce upon our consciousness. The id presses its demands upon the ego as mental representations. It is by these representations that we experience their force and articulate them in language. Here the physicalist aspects of Freud’s system meet the realm of cognitive apprehension and language; whereby neuro-mechanical forces become transformed into symbolic structures.

In short, for Freud the forces driving human behaviour, whilst sublimated into symbolic representations in thought, at their base are non-rational, having a primordial origin that is lost in a pre-historical past. They are also trans-cultural, representing an anthropological continuity, to be found in every type of human society.

For Marx there is no essential human nature; or rather, what is essential to human being is the transformation of nature, and in the process, humanity itself. What is taken to be human ‘nature’ is in fact the modes of behaviour and types of social relationship that pertain to a particular type of society, at a particular historical juncture. So, whereas for Freud the Oedipus complex and the psychical processes that created it were trans-historical, for Marx there was no such anthropological constant. For Marx, the stable and identifiable aspects of cultural, social and economic behaviour were historically relative.

This difference between Freud and Marx was a consequence of the deeper ontogenetic logics of their systems. For Freud, the structured psyche operated with its own dynamic workings, drawing upon the outside world for its creative material, but nonetheless autonomous of the outside world in its internal operations. For Marx, it was the mutually transforming interaction of conscious labour and the resistant outside world that defined the relationship of humanity to nature; a relationship of dialectical interdependence.

In the 1830s, the matter of ‘human essence’ had been a catalyst of debate and controversy amongst a group of philosophers - the Young Hegelians - of which Marx was one. In his publication *The Essence of Christianity*, Ludwig Feuerbach had applied an ‘inversion principle’ to argue that what we take to be ‘God’s essence’, is in fact is our own essence, refracted through a theological lens into the idea of a supreme divinity. The attributes of this divinity, those of self-consciousness and thought, the power to act upon the world and to love, were rarefied abstractions of an all-too-human ‘species-essence’.

In Marx’s early theoretical work, this humanist insight became the concept of ‘species-being’, emerging from his theory of estrangement; or alienation. Species-being, was what made human beings, *essentially* human, more that is than their mundane activities. Self-consciousness, creativity and crucially the recognition of the species-being of others are the qualities of human-kind that lift us out of the animal realm. Whilst class-society blocks this connectivity of the individual with the rest of humanity, the sense of this potential in the person becomes instead a sense of a loss, of a disconnect and of a striving to commune with others.

Marx’s reworking of Feuerbach’s philosophy was to become a critique that he would condense into eleven summary statements; the 1845 *Theses on Feuerbach*. For considerations of Marx’s view of human nature, the most important of these is the sixth thesis.

*Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual.*

*In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.*[[65]](#footnote-65)

So, for Marx, there is no ‘human essence’ to be found within the isolated individual. Rather the individual and their essential characteristics emerge from the constellation of social forces, interactions and structural relationships that constitute the society in which they live and that has produced them. They are the end result of chains of social cause and effect that connect them to the social whole; a totality of which they are the result. This is the antithesis of the Freudian framing of this relationship, in which society is the result of myriad interactions between individuals and their separate psychologies.

It would be incorrect however, to conclude from this generalised account, that for Marx the individual was a nullity; a marionette moved only by the strings attached to them by society. In fact, Marx does address aspects of mental activity that point to an outline of a psychological theory. This is most evident in his discussion of conscious labour.

In a celebrated passage from *Capital*, Marx explains the difference between the human process of labour upon the world, and the ways in which other living creatures work upon their environments.

*A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of their cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality.*[[66]](#footnote-66)

So, human labour is conscious, and involves a conceptualisation of the work to be done; an idea of the intended purpose of the task at hand. An imagining of the object, to be transformed or to be created, is also required. Labour *qua* labour, must exist ‘in the head’ before it can happen in the world.

This simple postulate hides a deeper dialectic. Since for the object to exist in thought, to be worked upon or to be created, we require a notion of the self that exists in relation to it; the self that will labour upon the world to achieve the intended goal. The human being cannot perform labour without also becoming a self-conscious agent. The process is one of mutual transformation: of the object by the labouring subject; and of the conscious subject by the work that it performs. The objectifying of the subject to itself that is involved in this dialectic is social. The relationships that make possible the accomplishment of the task reflect the nature of the society in which it will be carried out. To be successful, the subjective self must understand not only the material qualities of the object, and technical skills involved, but also these productive relationships. This is a result of the species-being we have already encountered.

The dialectical change of the self through its own labour – the ‘dialectic-of-self’ - is crucial to Marx’s understanding of ‘human nature’. For in this process of transformation, the subject becomes the means by which the labour to be done will be realised; in its envisioning of the task, the self also becomes an ‘object-for-itself’. The intended object of production in turn determines the nature of the necessary labour; and therefore, the character of the work required. This all depends upon the existing technique of the historical epoch; the raw materials to hand; the tools already created; the skills that are needed; the types of productive and social relationships that prevail; and the knowledge and experience of the processes and materials involved. The determination of the self by the productive process is, once again, social.

To be clear, it is the productive process that influences the subject primarily, not *vice versa*. In-so-doing, it determines not only the person’s sense-of-self in their concrete social and historical setting, their cultural identity and their instantiation within a concrete historical context, but also their sense-of-need. It is the objective potential and limitations of a society’s productive processes and technical capacity that creates the person’s externalised strivings, and therefore the aim of their labour. Needs that occur in one type of society, are inconceivable in another; with the emergence of a new kind of society, emerge also new types of need; including the sexual.

Once more, this runs directly counter to Freud’s formulations. For Freud, needs are fixed and universal, as we have seen. Whilst the means by which the person endeavours to meet their needs may vary with context, those needs themselves are historically constant, they do not change through time. Alternatively, for Marx the structuring of the self through labour, and more broadly through the form – the mode – of production that prevails, extends beyond their economic identification as a worker. It reaches into every aspect of life; cultural, aesthetic, sensual, sexual, and familial. The objective goal of labour whether individual or collective, has already and previously within a general economic form, provided both the need to be satisfied, and the means of satisfying that need; and therefore, the form – the mode – of consumption. They are co-dependent.

This interdependence of production and consumption is explored by Marx in the essays of the *Grundrisse*.[[67]](#footnote-67) He identifies three ways in which production and consumption interact. Firstly, in the essential processes of each, they merge together. Production involves the consumption, the decomposition, of raw materials (‘productive consumption’). Consumption makes possible the production of the human being, of the producer, and so also of the process of production (‘consumptive production’). Secondly, in their material (and historical) reality, there is not a simple identity; they are not merely ‘one and the same’ in an undifferentiated manner. They are distinct; however, they shape one another’s processes. Whilst production provides the object-of-consumption, so determining the character of consumption, there also consumption provides the object of production with its destination; its ‘finishing-touch’. Thirdly, they are mediating of one another. As just stated, consumption is the definitive endpoint of the productive process. Consequentially, consumption provides the object of production with its intended purpose. Without consumption, the object of production would be inert and without human meaning. In this sense, it would not in fact be a product at all. Conversely, the object that is produced creates the desire to consume. So, the process of production, in creating the want of what is produced, creates also the consumer; the need for the fruits of productive labour experienced in consumption. The mode of consumption then, far from being universal, emerges also as historically contingent, creating as it does the historical human subject.

Finally, in this discussion of the co-dependence of production and consumption, Marx makes an intriguing statement:

*Hunger is hunger; but the hunger that is satisfied with cooked meat eaten with fork and knife is a different kind of hunger from the one that devours raw meat with the aid of hands, nails and teeth.*[[68]](#footnote-68)

In this succinct and evocative sentence, Marx alludes to the place of human biology in relation to prevailing modes of production and consumption. Biology (here, ‘hunger’), in Marx’s view does not represent a fixed substratum underlying human culture; rather it is influenced by culture. Although it places absolute limitations upon the possibilities of human accomplishment, considering its role in consumption, production, and bodily experience, human biology cannot stand outside of human culture. So, it is also with sex. Anthropologically speaking the sexual urge is a necessary and universal principle; a vital aspect of the materiality of human existence. It varies of course with personality, circumstance, age, and health. But more fundamentally, as a general principle it does not explain the interpersonal meaning of ‘sex’ in a particular cultural context, for a specific social group or individual. The sex-drive itself does not help us understand variance in sexuality, attraction, or gender orientation.

This is an important theme to which we will return at points in our exploration of the contrasts between Marx and Freud.

**The mind in Freud**

*‘Mechanism’*

Freud’s earliest scientific work contributed to the development neurone-theory, the doctrine that all nervous tissues, and crucially the brain and central nervous system is made up of connected cells – the neurones.[[69]](#footnote-69) Influential scientific figures such as Herman Helmholtz and Freud’s teacher, Ernst Brücke, held to a ‘mechanist’ philosophy, that all mental activity, including at the highest levels of brain function, was the sum of electro-chemical impulses conducted by nervous tissue. Whilst Freud was to later move away from mechanism, its impact upon his thinking at this time was profound, and its trace can be detected in much of his later work.

An appreciation of Freud’s *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) helps to understand the deeper logic both of his early and later theorising of human consciousness. Indeed, this work is important precisely because it draws upon his empirical observations of non-human nervous tissue, and evidences emergent constructs and leaps of theoretical inference about the mind; and in ways that signpost Freud’s later structural conceptualisations of the psyche, establishing the metaphorical tropes that would characterise his thinking throughout his life: his Theory of Psychic Apparatus.

Freud’s early microscopic observations and theorising of the organic basis of neuronal systems led him to identify three types of neurone that he classified as *phi,* *psi* and *omega*; "φ, ψ and ω". On Freud’s account, a ‘nerve-force’, Qή travelled through these three types of neurone, providing an economy of nervous activity operating upon the principles of conservation-of-energy, ‘inertia’ and a tendency towards equilibrium. Whereas *phi* nerve-tissue was concerned with the receiving of excitatory input, *psi* neurones, acting as ‘contact-barriers’, controlled this input, preventing overload and neuronal chaos. Freud argued that Qή both ‘flows’ through these different sub-systems and also ‘fills’ the different types of neurone involved ahead of their discharge as energy-quanta. These discharges he saw as being ‘facilitated’ by neuronal pathways that become fixed, providing stable routes *via* which excessive energy can be cathected away from sites of accumulation. However, new pathways also become established that over time can become dominant, and so the process of ‘facilitation’ is characterised by a ‘sedimentation’ of redundant pathways, forming a kind of ‘memory structure’ in the vertebrate endopsychical system. Separately, Freud saw *omega* neurones as being concerned with perception, and the processing of external sensory information. This aspect of the organism’s navigation through its environment required the foregrounding of some informational elements over others, and the submerging of the latter into latent memory.

At higher and more complex levels of neurological and mental function, Freud still saw these different neuronal systems as providing the essential animus of human consciousness, and its interactions with its environment. In his modelling of 1895, the *omega* system is the locus of consciousness in the human being. It receives input from the neurones of the *phi* and *psi* systems that work as a substratum of somatic drives, or instincts. However, whereas the inputs of neuronal stimulation travelling from the *psi* into the *phi* systems are regulated *via* a homeostatic ‘inertia’, the *omega* system, receiving inputs from the *phi* system and the somatic drives that it generates, is afforded no such protection. It is ‘at the mercy’ of the nerve-force of the primary neuronal systems working upon it and, at a higher level, leaving consciousness in need of ‘discharge’ of excessive energy.

With historical hindsight we can see here anticipations of the psychoanalytic modelling for which Freud would become famous. In fact, at this time, in the autumn of 1895, Freud already had a strong sense of the importance of these ideas for modern psychology. In a letter to his friend Wilhelm Fleiss, he described his ambition for this work as being "to peel off from psychopathology a gain for normal psychology".[[70]](#footnote-70)

*Transition*

The shift away from a unidirectional causal logic in which higher mental functions are essentially epiphenomena of primary neuronal systems, was the result of an evolution of thinking and discovery for Freud that happened over more than a decade. The earliest influences in his scientific thinking were teachers and professional supervisors such as Theodor Meynert and Jean-Martin Charcot who were steeped in the ‘mechanistic’ paradigm of studies on psychological disorders and psychosis. For them, all neuroses were ultimately rooted in problems of neuro-physiology.

However, Freud began to harbour doubts about a strict adherence to mechanism. These surfaced in debates at the time about ‘hysteria’,[[71]](#footnote-71) a type of psychosis characterised by symptoms such as fitting and paralysis. Charcot’s clinical observations, his own commitment to mechanism notwithstanding, revealed that the paralytic symptoms associated with hysteria did not in fact conform to any known neurological pattern. Increasingly Freud began to speculate about the role of ideas as a cause of physical symptoms; a type of psycho-somaticism that ran contrary to mechanism.

Freud’s increasingly unorthodox theorising of the outward symptoms of hysteria cast him in this period into the margins of established medical science. He was to find an ally in his old teacher at the Institute of Physiology of the University of Vienna, Josef Breuer.

For many years, Breuer had been using hypnotism in his therapeutic practice, as well as a technique for which he coined the term ‘cathartic method’. This involved the unearthing and ‘talking-through’ of early childhood memories that lay beneath adult psychological and behavioural disorders. This ‘talking-cure’ had the effect of alleviating the neurotic symptoms of the patient. The fact that physical symptoms such as problems with speech and even paralysis, could be improved in this way, confounded the mechanistic view that all such disorders must be rooted in neuro-physiology; that all outward manifestations of hysteria were caused by malfunction in the nervous system.

Freud became especially interested in one of Breuer’s cases: that of ‘Anna O’.[[72]](#footnote-72) In this case, that had already been made well known in psychiatric circles by Breuer, when the patient relived the traumatic experience of nursing her dying father, small details of these memories had become significant for her later symptomology. For example, squinting was revealed to be a symptomatic suppression of the analysand’s memory of squinting at their watch in the dark at their father’s bedside. The realisation of this in the patient, allowed the ‘event’ to be brought out of a realm of repressed memory - her ‘unconscious’ - and into a realm of conscious apprehension and understanding; and from this a relief of the pain that had accompanied it. Freud increasingly saw such symptoms, working as self-protective mechanisms of the psyche – understood now as symbolic representations of repressed material – as being of great interest and theoretical importance.

*The ugliest as well as the most intimate details of sexual life may be thought and dreamt of in seemingly innocent allusions to activities in the kitchen; and the symptom of hysteria could never be interpreted if we forgot that sexual symbolism can find its best hiding place behind what is commonplace and inconspicuous.*[[73]](#footnote-73)

Freud and Breuer published their therapeutic findings, based on the case of Anna O and four other case-histories, in their *Studies on Hysteria* (1895).[[74]](#footnote-74) This work forwarded a theoretical stance that was pivotal for Freud’s emerging model of the human psyche. He now saw clearly that a part of the psyche that was hidden from normal daily thought, a subconscious realm, impacted upon conscious life in ways that could be disruptive and harmful to the individual. Moreover, the ‘traumatic memory’ did not disappear over time, but remained in this hidden recess as an active pathogenic presence; causing an accumulation of negative emotional energy, which over time could produce terrible mental, behavioural and psychological effects. However, the repressed traumas that were responsible for the neuroses that resulted, were accessible to therapeutic treatment.

Increasingly also Freud was coming to see the repression of traumatic experience, its relegation out of the domain of normal self-awareness, as a largely sexual phenomenon; the traumas involved often linked to experiences of one sexual type or another. Here, Freud and Breuer were not in agreement. Indeed, this was the point upon which they were to part company in terms of theory, professional collaboration, and friendship. Nonetheless, Freud’s work with Breuer, and their 1895 publication, marked his shift from the mechanistic theorising of his early scientific career to the symbolism that later characterised his understanding of the mind.

*The Topographical Model*

Freud presented his early theory of the mind in *The Interpretation of Dreams* of 1899. Until he began to study dreams, he had been involved primarily in controversies about neurosis. That work had led him to the idea of an unconscious containing sedimented memories of past traumas that exert a powerful though covert influence upon the person in their conscious life. By 1896 however, he had embarked upon a systematic study of dreams because, whilst a normal and familiar experience, they could also be seen as a model of neurosis ‘in miniature’. Furthermore, whilst the person slept, the normal mechanisms of self-control and internal repression that regulated their daily life were suspended. The free reign this gave to the unconscious also made dreams interesting for the intra-psychical dynamics that they revealed, for illuminations of illnesses of the mind and also for normal psychology.

*The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind. By analysing dreams we can take a step forward in our understanding of that most marvellous and most mysterious of all instruments. Only a small step, no doubt; but a beginning. And this beginning will enable us to proceed further with its analysis, on the basis of other structures which must be termed pathological.*[[75]](#footnote-75)

As far back (that we know) as the Sumerians of Mesopotamia more than 7,000 years ago, dreams have been seen as meaningful, and requiring of interpretation. Freud now undertook a systematic study of dream meaning with the deeper aim of shedding light upon the working of the human psyche. His analytical model of ‘the dream’ comprised a number of elements and mechanisms.

Freud saw the dream essentially as the distorted expression of desire. This was the ‘wish-fulfilment’ of the dream. Often this was sexual at root, the result either of early sexualised experiences or traumas, or of adult wants. Even in its sleeping state, however, the mind in Freud’s account exerts a censorship upon the full expression of such memories. This struggle produces the ‘manifest dream’. This is the dream we experience. It is the result of the ‘dream-work’ which, acting upon the ‘latent-dream’, the true or original dream material that is being censored, creates the dream that we remember.

The dream-work, the author of the manifest-dream, operates *via* the creation of symbols. The appearances of objects or words that are quite ordinary and ubiquitous in normal conscious life, become suffused with symbolic meaning in the dream. Such ‘dream objects’ may be taken from the mundane experiences of the day, whilst their meaning may reach far back into the suppressed memories of the persons distant past. So, a comb can become symbolic of a frustrated tryst, a tree symbolic of a father’s gifts, a purse symbolic of a vagina, and so on. There is no prescriptive order to how such symbols are ascribed, only that they always represent something that has been suppressed, and put ‘out of (conscious) mind’. The excavation of the unique meaning of each is something that requires interpretation, conducted through the therapist-patient alliance.

Freud’s study of dreams led him to identify four mechanisms employed by the dream-work.

1. Condensation. This refers to the layering of different meanings and symbolic representations onto the same specific element of the manifest dream. So, a dream-character for instance, can in fact represent two, or even several figures from the real-world life of the dreamer. An item from the ‘day-just-gone’ can be infused with meanings that even pull in different directions of interpretation. This means of course that dreams are complex and paradoxical, raising problems always for their decipherment.
2. Displacement. Freud observed that the meaning of an element of a dream, or even of the dream in its entirety, was often not true to the latent-dream from which it was derived. Its presented meaning – the story of the dream, the dreamer’s direct sense of the what the dream was about – was often more apparent than real. The actual meaning then, had been *displaced*, from its origin deep in the psyche, onto a canvas of seemingly quite unrelated symbolic objects.
3. Secondary revision. This can be thought of as the ‘editing’ of the manifest dream; the stitching together of otherwise disconnected fragments into some kind of logical sense. Where the symbolic elements of the dream represent difficult, painful or confusing ideational material drawn from life experience that has been repressed, other elements drawn from consciousness are used to ‘fill-the-gaps’ or complete the narrative of the dream. It is ‘secondary’ in the sense that it comes at the end of the dream-work; its task to tidy-up the story.
4. Representation. Freud regarded this as the most interesting aspect of the dream-work, and also the most difficult to understand. For the dream to be constructed, meanings must be converted into pictorial representations, or definite word associations. Whilst consciousness can only do this with effort, in the sleeping state this occurs quite naturally, with no work required on the part of the sleeper (to their knowledge, at least). It is the job of therapy, to wind this process backwards as excavation and interpretation of the latent dream material.

Freud’s interests had by now travelled from a focus upon neurosis, to one upon ‘normal psychology’. In so doing, he had developed his modelling of psychical structure. Most importantly, through his systematic study of dreams he had made his most far-reaching discovery: the role of the unconscious in the normal life of the person. By the turn of the century, along with his shift to the analysis of symbols, the insights he had gained from his therapeutic work and his study of dreams, Freud had ploughed the ground for a generalised theory of mind.

Freud’s first account of the psyche, his ‘topographical model’, consisted of parts that were in dynamic tension with one another. Beneath our conscious, self-aware mental life, there lay an unconscious (the ‘system unconscious’), an opaque realm of primitive needs and libidinous impulses. These were the result of infantile wishes and the repressed material of forbidden desires in the adult. If not repressed entirely, they could only enter consciousness (the ‘system conscious’) after filtering by the pre-conscious (the ‘system preconscious’), acting as a censor and regulator of potentially dangerous urges. Where especially powerful strivings in the adult were repressed, the result could be a ‘fixation’ causing obsessive and repetitive behaviour.

Moreover, the unconscious was different to the other components of the mind in other respects. The unconscious had no sense of time, with material from early life exerting equal or even greater force in the disturbances it created, as or more than more recent experiences.

*The unconscious is quite timeless. The most important as well as the strangest characteristic of psychical fixation is that all impressions are preserved, not only in the same for in which they were first received, but also in all the forms which they have adopted in their further developments.*[[76]](#footnote-76)

The unconscious also did not distinguish between the real and the unreal. Imagined experiences and actual experiences in the person’s life were treated with equal significance and value. This also meant that the logic of normal daily life did not apply, with ideas being merged that would be quite incompatible in reality. The ‘system unconscious’ was therefore not directly knowable or accessible. This material could however be detected by its effects in the person’s life, and *via* indirect therapeutic techniques such as ‘word-association’.

*Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psychoanalysis warns us not to equate perceptions by means of consciousness with unconscious mental processes which are their object. Like the physical, the psychical is not necessarily in reality what it appears to be. We shall be glad to learn, however, that the correction of internal perception will turn out not to offer such great difficulties as the correction of external perception – that internal objects are less unknowable than the external world.*[[77]](#footnote-77)

Between the unconscious and the conscious lay the preconscious. The preconscious contained repressed memories that could be brought back to consciousness often quite easily, and also through therapy. Moreover, the preconscious was something familiar to us in our normal lives. In his 1901 book, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, Freud describes the many ways in which material that has been pushed into the preconscious causes, parapraxes - slips-of-the-tongue, significant moments of forgetfulness, meaningful errors, and so on. These three elements then, the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious made up a topography in which the self-awareness of the person in their normal day-to-day life, sat atop a vast realm of unconsciousness; the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

In this period Freud developed his first formulation of the ‘pleasure principle’. This referred to the tendency of the organism to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. Actually, in this early version of the principle Freud spoke of the organism’s avoidance of ‘unpleasure’. This could refer to the failure to achieve pleasure as much as to physical or emotional distress. In their endeavours to achieve their goals under the influence of the primitive urges of the unconscious, the person could experience unfulfilled desire, undischarged energy and the nervous tension of unsuccessful strivings. In this circumstance, they could consequently descend into fixated neurosis or alternatively, the ‘unpleasure’ they experienced could be pushed back down into the unconscious as repressed ideational material.

In his 1911 essay, *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning*,[[78]](#footnote-78) Freud introduced the ‘reality principle’ that countered the impulses created by the appetite for pleasure. Freud begins his discussion with the observation that at the root of neurosis is a ‘flight from reality’, a turning away from a painful external world, inwards into a realm of fantasy and hallucination. The very young infant also, not yet able to control its world, takes refuge in the hallucinatory satisfaction of internal needs. It is the inadequacy of this realm in really meeting such needs that leads to a striving to master and manipulate the external environment; so, creating the reality principle. At this stage of development, the sense organs become increasingly important as the young infant displays ‘attention’ to its world, committing what they ‘note’ to memory, and learning how to ‘judge’ the correctness of the ideas they have developed about objects within their reach. During this developmental process, ‘thinking’ becomes important for the child’s self-mastery. Over time the reality principle comes to dominate over the pleasure principle, as the child realises the possibility of the delayed gratification of pleasure-seeking desires.

*Actually, the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle implies no deposing of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it. A momentary pleasure, uncertain in its results, is given up, but only in order to gain along the path an assured pleasure at a later time.*[[79]](#footnote-79)

All of Freud’s theorising of the mind and its growth from the neonatal stage, through childhood and on to adolescence and adulthood, was related to his emerging theory of human sexuality. In his *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*[[80]](#footnote-80)of 1905*,* along with his model of psychosexual phases of development, based upon an ‘oral stage’, an ‘anal-sadistic’ stage, a ‘genital stage’ and ‘latency stage’, Freud promoted the discovery he claimed as unique; that of infantile sexuality.

*It is remarkable that those writers who endeavour to explain the qualities and reactions of the adult individual have given so much more attention to the ancestral period than to the period of the individual’s own existence—that is, they have attributed more influence to heredity than to childhood.* […] *No author has to my knowledge recognized the lawfulness of the sexual impulse in childhood, and in the numerous writings on the development of the child the chapter on “Sexual Development” is usually passed over.*[[81]](#footnote-81)

In this phase Freud also put forward a novel concept based upon the Oedipus myth of ancient Greece that was to capture the imagination of his readership and a wider public. In Sophocles’ play, *Oedipus Rex*,the eponymous hero slays his father, King Laius and marries his mother (unknowingly), Queen Jocasta. Freud used the story now to illustrate a dynamic in human psychosexual development, that he would later term the ‘Oedipus Complex’, holding it to be universal across all cultures.[[82]](#footnote-82) This dynamic emerged with the growth of the young child into awareness of their dependence upon their mother, and their developing sense of rivalry with their father for their mother’s love. For Freud, the Oedipus complex was the key to the riddle of sexual attraction and coupling in adult life. It was a theory he was to amend and develop for most of the rest of his career.

*The Structural Model*

The years across the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the outbreak of the world war and the years following it, saw Freud struggling to address what he recognised as internal weaknesses in his theorising. The central issue, and the point on which his first model of the mind would falter, was that of repression. Freud’s theorisation of the mind lacked a mechanism for repression, an account of how it was that traumatic memories and painful aspects of the psyche, largely of a sexual nature, could be repressed by the other non-sexual drives in the model, such as that of hunger. One problem for Freud was his acknowledgement that the reality principle did not in fact counter the pleasure principle; rather it merely regulated it, tempering its immediate demands to achieve satisfaction at some later point. The reality principle served the interests of the more fundamental pleasure principle.

There was also the troublesome question of why it should be that certain individuals, certainly some types of neurotic patient in Freud’s clinical cases, compulsively repeated their traumas, seeking to re-experience over and over, episodes that clearly caused them distress. In addition, there were the examples of recurring anxiety dreams (clearly not driven by ‘the wish’), and the repetitively re-lived traumas of war veterans. These issues Freud tackled in his pivotal 1920 publication *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; and in so doing, put forward his theory of drives, themselves the result of primordial impulses.

The apparent over-riding of the pleasure principle that Freud saw in his patients, as well as in some aspects of children’s play, he labelled ‘repetition-compulsion’. For his cases, Freud found a new purpose to the fixated behaviours that characterised many of the neuroses involved. The repetitive patterns, or ‘reaction-formations’, he observed in his clinical practice he interpreted now as returns to earlier life-episodes that were essentially attempts by the psyche to deal with unresolved shocks and traumas.[[83]](#footnote-83) In such obsessive behaviour, the individual repeatedly re-lived the anxieties associated with painful recollections from their lives. The pleasure principle did not always prevail, and Freud’s observations forced him to accept its dethroning as the commanding principle of the human psyche.

To resolve the theoretical impasse he had encountered Freud elaborated the novel concept of the ‘death instinct’; later to be termed ‘Thanatos’. His reasoning ran as follows. At the most basic and irreducible level of life, covering the entire spectrum from the simplest organisms to complex life forms and onto humanity, a death-instinct reigned, under which life strives to achieve a final entropic stability and stasis, that can only mean its own end; that can only mean death. And yet the organism also strives to survive and reproduce itself. The death-instinct then was balanced against a second instinct, this one a life-force; later to be termed Eros. Whilst the overarching trajectory was defined by a drive towards death, the life-instinct checked any premature termination for the organism. The aim of life, was indeed death; however not any death. Only a particular kind of death would be appropriate to the particular organism, in its particular environment; and, by extension, for the particular person, in their particular life circumstance. Freud’s model of the psyche was now rooted in a dual ‘instinct theory’.

A shift from a model rooted in a striving for pleasure, to one rooted in a striving for death, demanded a revision of Freud’s entire model of the psyche. Freud’s now substantially revised the topographical model, focusing far more upon on the ego. The ego drew its energy from the unconscious, the site as we have seen of the competing instincts of death and love; of destruction and creation. In its efforts to manage reality, the ego also created an idea of itself, a kind of self-image of its strivings and achievements. This became an ‘ego ideal’, a psychical precipitate of the ego’s activity; an entity for which Freud coined the term ‘superego’. Whilst, like the ego the superego drew its energy from the unconscious, it also played the role of a harsh and unforgiving critic, standing in judgement over the ego’s failings and shortcomings, and creating a background sense of the guilt in the subconscious life of the person.

In Freud’s new model, the opposition between ego and superego had consequences for psychosexual development and the ways in which the person grows into their social world. This was the result of a difference in how the ego and super-ego incorporated the formative relationships of their childhood. Whereas the tendency in the ego was to relate to the object or person of desire by ‘bringing it into itself’, internalising a mental version of it in a process of ‘introjection’, that of the super-ego was to identify with an abstraction of the object or person of desire, so ‘becoming’ it or them in its imagination. Whereas the ego strove to *have* the object, the super-ego strove to *be* the object.

*The basis of the process is what is called an ‘identification’ – that is to say the assimilation of one ego to another one, as a result of which the first ego behaves like the second in certain aspects, imitates it and in a sense takes it up into itself. Identification has been not unsuitably compared with the oral cannibalistic incorporation of the other person. It is a very important form of attachment to someone else, probably the very first, and not the same thing as the choice of an object. The difference between the two can be expressed in some such way as this. If a boy identifies himself with his father, he wants to be like his father; if he makes him the object of his choice, he wants to have him, to possess him. In the first case his ego is altered on the model of his father; in the second case that is not necessary.*[[84]](#footnote-84)

The separate socialising mechanisms of the ego and the super-ego had implications for gendering in the person. Under heteronormative social and cultural cues and pressures, the male child would seek to *have* the mother, to introject her presence into his ego, later in life seeking to *possess* the feminine object, the women, the wife; and as he developed, he would come to *identify with* the father *via* his super-ego, striving to *become* the masculine object, the man, the husband. In the female child, the process was the reverse. Here, again under heteronormative social and cultural influences, the girl would seek to *have* the father, to introject him into her ego, later in life seeking to *possess* the masculine object, the man, the husband; and as she developed she would come to *identify with* the mother *via* her super-ego, striving to *become* the feminine object, the woman, the wife.

The key elements of Freud’s new conceptualisation of the psyche were by now coming into focus. His structural model was laid out fully in his 1923 essay, *The Ego and the Id.* The third component now of the structural model after the ego and the superego, was the id. Whilst the general categories of conscious, preconscious and unconscious were still present, the new model was centred upon the interactions between these three principal psychodynamic elements. In addition, the id was a powerful entity that contained the two primordial forces – the life instinct and the death instinct - that directly and indirectly governed human behaviour.

So, the three actors of the structural model were locked in tension with one another: the ego and the id struggled for command of the individual’s behaviour; the ego and the super-ego also wrestled for dominance in the person’s life. In fact, the id and the super-ego could be seen as working in alliance with one another, in that the higher strivings of the super-ego drew their energy from the id itself; this cathectic energy now decoupled from sexual objects, was reoriented upon loftier aims in a process Freud termed ‘sublimation’.

Between these struggles the ego was caught in the middle, besieged from both sides, as well as having to deal with the threats and dangers of the external world, this being its principle role.

*This super-ego occupies a special position between the ego and the id. It belongs to the ego and shares its high degree of psychological organization; but it has a particularly intimate connection with the id. It is in fact a precipitate of the first object-cathexes of the id and is the heir to the Oedipus complex after its demise. This super-ego can confront the ego and treat it like an object; and it often treats it very harshly. It is as important for the ego to remain on good terms with the super-ego as with the id.*[[85]](#footnote-85)

The interactions between these constituent elements was complex, as indeed where the internal dynamics of each. So, the ego was rooted in the id and itself was both conscious in its dealings with the world, and also unconscious insofar as it pushed down unwanted material into the pre-consciousness realm of the psyche. This latter aspect to the ego’s activity, gave Freud the mechanism of repression that his previous model had lacked.

To engage with external reality then, the ego operated principally as a system of perception, whilst in its interactions with the id it dealt with repressed ideational material. One further consequence of this was that whilst the id was an opaque and impenetrable realm, the ego contained the residue of ‘verbal-images’ that had been repressed, and so could be accessed and brought into the light once more by analysis.[[86]](#footnote-86)

*Freud’s ‘mind’*

Freud’s theory of mind, as we have seen, developed through his therapeutic observations and theoretical speculations. His discovery of the unconscious as an object of importance for a scientific understanding of the human mind, and as being accessible to analysis, provided the basis for his ‘topographical model’. Here, the preconscious acted as a conduit of mental material that the conscious part of the psyche found difficult or painful, working to push it into the unconscious, rendering it harmless to the person’s normal functioning. Freud could not however, explain the recurrence of repressed material through cycles of behaviour that repetitively conjured up previous traumatic experiences.

Freud’s later ’structural model’ model of the psyche placed conflict at its dynamic centre. The three entities that constituted the model were locked in a permanent struggle, driven by the restless energy of the id. The ego ceaselessly battled with the id, striving to temper its impulses with its own perceptions of the threats and hazards of external reality. Meanwhile, the superego, the ‘precipitate’ of the ego’s own endeavours, and representing the ego’s self-ideal, stood in judgement over it, creating by its censures a permanent residue of unfocused guilt in the person.

**The mind in Marxism**

For Marx, as we have already seen, ‘society’ is the analytical starting point for understanding human behaviour; material social processes being the ultimate source of human consciousness. However, it is the nature of the relationship between the material world and the mind that is in question here; the mechanism by which social experience becomes ideational content.

Within the tradition of Marxist thought on this question, a range of philosophical versions of materialism have been maintained; and always, given their revolutionary orientation, connected to the question of the relationship of the mind to both nature and to economic structure. It is the type of the relationship, between economic and social structure on the one side, and human consciousness and historical action on the other, that is of interest here; particularly regarding the causal aspects of this relationship.

Examples of the type of materialism we have already encountered in David Hume, namely that an object of the external world making an impression upon the mind in turn creates a representation of it, can indeed be found in the Marxist tradition; and sometimes *alongside of*, or woven into the different and more dialectical types of philosophical materialism alluded to. An important example comes from no less a figure that Vladimir Lenin.

Throughout most of 1908 and the early part of 1909, Lenin was involved in a polemic against a philosophical tendency within the Russian revolutionary movement: empirio-criticism.[[87]](#footnote-87) Empirio-criticism promoted an epistemology premised upon ‘pure experience’ that did not require non-experiential metaphysical categories, structures or constructions. More to the point, this ‘naïve realism’ dispensed with any notion of a necessary underlying material reality in favour of a complete reliance upon sensuous experience for our knowledge of the world. For Lenin then, it was the anti-materialist leanings he detected in empirio-criticism towards subjective-idealism and psychological symbolism that was the problem. He subjected it to unforgiving criticism in his 1909 publication, *Materialism and Empirio-criticism.*[[88]](#footnote-88)

The opening part of Lenin’s attack was articulated *via* a reflectionist version of materialism, that drew for its inspiration upon some key passages in Engels’writings. In this theorisation the external object makes an impression, in a Humean sense, upon the mind, which then creates a mental ‘image’ of it.

*… the materialist Frederick Engels … constantly and without exception speaks in his works of things and their mental pictures or images (Gedanken-Abbilder), and it is obvious that these mental images arise exclusively from sensations.*[[89]](#footnote-89)

And

*Anybody who reads Anti-Dühring and Ludwig Feuerbach with the slightest care will find scores of instances when Engels speaks of things and their reflections in the human brain, in our consciousness, thought, etc. Engels does not say that sensations or ideas are “symbols” of things, for consistent materialism must here use “image,” picture, or reflection instead of “symbol,” …* [[90]](#footnote-90)

Later, Lenin puts things even more clearly.

*Matter is a philosophical category denoting the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them.*[[91]](#footnote-91)

So, for Lenin in this period the mental ‘object’ was the result of a ‘copying’ of the actual object, a mental construction that reflected the impressions created by the object upon the senses and upon the brain. This was a type of materialism that he equated with ‘objective sensationalism’, a philosophical current in popular pre-War European philosophy.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Lenin’s advocacy of this type of sensation-based materialism, that he was to jettison in his later philosophical writings,[[93]](#footnote-93) was critiqued at some length by the Dutch communist Antonie Pannekoek. We will survey Pannekoek’s comments upon Lenin’s position in 1909, and indeed his writings on materialism in Marxism more generally. It was a topic he wrote about frequently, returning to it repeatedly throughout his political career.

In his *Lenin as Philosopher* of 1938*,*[[94]](#footnote-94)Pannekoek separates two types of materialism: bourgeois materialism;[[95]](#footnote-95) and historical materialism.[[96]](#footnote-96) The first connects ‘spiritual phenomena’ to the brain’s ‘physico-chemical-biological’ processes. The second relates mental contents to the external world; and to social structure. For this second type, and in familiar Marxist terms, Pannekoek emphasises the *active* – as opposed to *contemplative* - character of the relationship between the mind and the world; a relationship centred upon the transformational character of human labour upon its object that has been described.[[97]](#footnote-97) Pannekoek’s charge against Lenin’s 1909 position is that it retains the materialism of the first type in this distinction.

Pannekoek argues that bourgeois materialism opposes itself not to idealism *per se*, but to fideism; it is a critique first and foremost of religion. This is the tendency he identifies in Lenin’s position. And the root of that he finds in the influence of Georgi Plekhanov, the leading Marxist philosopher of the time, upon Lenin’s thinking.

Plekhanov, according to Pannekoek, confuses the meaning of a historically pivotal statement by Marx on the nature of the relationship between consciousness and the world. In the first of his eleven theses on Feuerbach, written in 1845,[[98]](#footnote-98) Marx distinguished between the material object as an object of contemplation, and alternatively as one of human labour.

*The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the active side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such.*

*Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity. Hence, in* [*The Essence of Christianity*](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/feuerbach/works/essence/index.htm)*,*[[99]](#footnote-99) *he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical manifestation. Hence he does not grasp the significance of “revolutionary”, of “practical-critical”, activity.*[[100]](#footnote-100)

For Marx and Engels, and the group of Young Hegelian philosophers with which they were broadly aligned, Feuerbach’s reduction of god and all things religious, to the secular domain of human creation, had been exhilarating. However, Marx came to see this as an ‘inconsistent materialism’. Whilst the relationship between the human being and their world was one of regard only, of observation and scrutiny, the sensuous world of experience was simply a given, independent of human action; and reality the result of the churn of myriad objects, fixed in their multiform objective characteristics. This rendering of the human being, not in terms of their active involvement in the world, but only in their purely theoretical aspect, retained for Marx the trace of idealism. Only with the re-rendering of the human being in their active relationship with the objective world, centred upon the transformative role of human labour working upon nature, and indeed back upon consciousness itself, could this last vestige of idealism be put aside with finality.

For Pannekoek, the radical break with Feuerbach that the ‘first thesis’ represented, was lost in Plekhanov’s conflation of the quite different ideas of Marx and Engels on the one hand, and Feuerbach on the other. The result, on this argument, was that the importance of the first thesis for the achievement of a thoroughgoing materialism became submerged beneath an otherwise relatively superficial anti-fideism; and the banal observation that the brain is a prerequisite for human consciousness.

*It is a significant indication of the point of view of Plechanov* (sic) *that he does not see this antagonism and that he assigns the main importance to the trivial community of opinion – which is unimportant for the real issue – that thoughts are produced by the brain.*

Other figures in the Marxist tradition have considered the interaction between mind and the world. The first, from the standpoint of philosophy, is György Lukács who in his *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*,[[101]](#footnote-101) written in the mid-1920s, defended his account of consciousness from accusations of philosophical idealism. The second, from the standpoint of experimental psychology, is Lev Vygotsky, who in his 1934 work *Thought and Language*,[[102]](#footnote-102) proffered a theory of the process by which mental concepts come into existence; a theory that ran counter to the ‘copy’ theory of Lenin’s 1909 materialism. And the third, from the standpoint of literary criticism, is Frederic Jameson, whose 1981 *The Political Unconscious* suggests an ‘unconscious’ that is non-libidinal, and the source of contradictions that whilst hidden to the self, find symbolic resolution in cultural artefacts.

In his *Tailism and the Dialectic*, Lukács maintains the impossibility of a direct connection between the mind and the objective world. To his critics, this represented a sundering of the connection of the dialectic of consciousness with that of the natural world. This was the ‘idealism’ of which he stood accused. The debate posed a question that is relevant to our broader inquiry: If all our consciousness is conceptual, the result of mental activity, then how can we know the world as it really is, without that is some type of direct and immediate experience with it?[[103]](#footnote-103)

But how we might locate such ‘immediate’ experience.[[104]](#footnote-104) The question is not straightforward. Experience, even when novel, comes to us with some mental organisation that is proximal to it. A new experience of reality presents itself to us as just that - a ‘new experience’ not yet integrated into our general mental schema, but still recognisable as a part of the world of which we are familiar. Alternatively, we can identify the sensory input in an analytical exercise that separates it out from its mental aspect. But even then, the sense-data involved does not exist in isolation in a pure form. Rather, it comes to us as part of a material environment or social circumstance, reflecting our particular position within it. It is dependent also upon our physical condition, the health of our senses, and the satisfaction of our basic needs, and so on. Indeed, our search for a pure sensory input into our conscious thought processes, that is not mediated in one way or another, takes us to ever greater abstractions. Ultimately, we can defend the notion of immediate experience of the world only as an inferred *limit*, a ‘zero-point’ that we can treat as ‘real’, but with no content of its own. Reversing this logic, and working from the outside world inwards into the mind, we can regard this liminal position as also representing an *origin*; or perhaps a *source* of moment-to-moment information about the world to which the mind responds and seeks to organise towards its own survival.

An analogy from chemistry with its language of elements and compounds, can help us to better appreciate this point. So, chlorine can exist in diatomic form as a gas, in solid form as an ionic lattice, and in solute form as a chloride or hypochlorite salt. In fact, ‘chlorine’ does not exist unless in one observable form or another. Even in its highly reactive and unstable free radical form we know it, not directly, but by its oxidative effects. It is itself a non-empirical abstraction generalised from empirical observation; a construct of atomic theory and mathematical modelling. It is real, though *inferred* as such; the various forms of chlorine being what chlorine *is*. The contact between mind and world has this type of philosophical status. So, as sense-data enters the mind it does so in an ideational form. It cannot enter thought in some other way, independently of mental processes. The creation of ‘experience’ then, involves the melding of sensory stimulation with the activity of the mind, instantaneously and in the very moment of entry. It is *the way* sense-data is assimilated by the mind.[[105]](#footnote-105) This point is consequential and we will return to it later in an exploration of the mind’s relationship with nature.

So, *direct* contact with the world stands outside of ‘experience’. We can infer it as a ‘limit’ to our mental apprehension of the world, as well as an ‘origin’ of our organic character as biological beings. And conscious apprehension of the world requires experience, with all of the layered mediation mentioned above and more, but also combined with the operational concepts that work upon it to create understanding. And yet, how do such concepts themselves emerge?

We can create a hypothetical scale of mental constructs, from novel sensory inputs not yet integrated into any conceptual schema (‘new experience’), through to highly organised conceptual articulations, informed by sensory inputs that are quite familiar (‘integrated experience’), and that bring no surprise. Drawing upon experimental studies with young children, the child developmentalist Vygotsky created this type of scale to illustrate pathways of mental development and the emergence of concepts.[[106]](#footnote-106) His classification was based upon tests that asked children of different ages to group blocks of different shapes, colours and labels. It ran as follows:

* Syncretism. The assembling of groups (physical and mental) based upon random selection or spatial distribution but with no objective meaning.
* Complex formation (first type). The formation of groups (physical and mental) based upon objective characteristics observed by the child, that are factual, rather than logical; as in family groupings for example. The principle is that of association.
* Complex formation (second type). The formation of groups (physical and mental) based upon objective characteristics that distinguish sub-groups from one another, or that represent actual similarities, allowing for their organisation into collections. The principle is that of assortment.
* Chain-complex formation. The creation of linked groups (physical and mental), by which the child, having assembled objects according to one attribute, moves into a different grouping activity based upon another attribute of some of the same objects.
* Diffuse-complex formation. The creation of groupings (physical and mental) by the observation of degrees of similarity *e.g.* shadings of colour, composite shapes, *etc.*, that allow these assemblages to shift from one type to another. These groupings are fluid, though they are still based upon observed and factual attributes.
* Pseudo-concept formation. The creation of groupings (physical and mental) that are based upon factual attributes, but that are named by the child using words that are borrowed from the adult. These words for the adult represent a generalisation based upon observation and experience of the world. They symbolise an abstract idea: a concept. However, the child’s use of the word still relies upon objects of experience, despite the *appearance* of conceptual thought.
* Concept formation. The creation of a unified mental concept that works independently of particular observations of the world, and that can be transferred from one experience to another. The concept is represented by a word, standing as its symbol in relation to others, making possible mastery of the environment and rational communication; the word being provided by the child’s social world so integrating them into a culture.

So, the introduction of the ‘word’ (symbol) acting as a mediating third term between the object and the concept enables understanding for the child, and the possibility of communication. This facility becomes apparent at puberty.

In his account of mental development and of the emergence of conceptual thinking, Vygotsky is at pains to stress the active role of the mental operations involved. This is the opposite of the ‘copy’ theory of the development of ideas in which repeated exposure to the object gradually imprints it as a mental representation; the mind being essentially a passive receiver of impressions of the world.

*When the process of concept formation is seen in all its complexity, it appears as a movement of thought within the pyramid of concepts, constantly alternating between two directions, from the particular to the general, and from the general to the particular.*

*… a concept is formed, not through the interplay of associations, but through an intellectual operation in which all the elementary mental functions participate in a specific combination.*

*… the use of the word is an integral part of the developing processes, and the word maintains its guiding function in the formation of genuine concepts, to which these processes lead.*[[107]](#footnote-107)

Vygotsky’s view of the role of the word in mental processes, and of language more generally, gives one last insight that is useful for our inquiry. This is the notion of ‘inner speech’. The outward speech of the child occurs in two forms: egocentric speech; and social speech. With egocentric speech the child focuses upon themselves and their immediate environment, often showing little interest in communication with others. With social speech communication and shared understandings occur. Inner speech however, is not anchored to ‘the word’; it can be wordless, working in ‘meaning’ rather than formal language. Through inner speech such meaning can attach to words, though often in an unstable, fluctuating manner, oscillating between its word and wordless forms. In this theorisation, such is the nature of thought, and its emergence, development and maturation.[[108]](#footnote-108)

Vygotsky’s theory of concept formation provides a model of mental development in the individual. However, Marxism is not only a theory of social dynamics, generally understood. It is also a theory of the character of human consciousness in its historical context. Our question now is ‘How do we explain the self that is able to reflect upon its own existence, yet is also unaware of its social origins that remain obscure to it; so being unable to understand its creation as a historical entity?’

For Jameson, there is an unconscious that is the result of the history of a people, that is active in their social experience and that is particular to them. This ‘history’ however, is ‘not there’ in a material sense. There is nothing tangible that can be grasped in any substantive way. Its force as a cause lies in its hidden character, and its effects are political; manifest in human behaviour at the level of the individual, the group and the society in its entirety. Jameson deems history, borrowing a concept from Spinoza, to be an ‘absent cause’; always working on the present; yet always obscure to those that are its bearers.

This ‘history’ however, is not a simple and homogeneous cause. Rather it is full of contradiction, and of tensions and antagonisms that are felt in the moment-to-moment reality of the present; felt as the ‘ideological unconscious’ working its effects upon the conscious mind and the behaviours of social actors. The importance of this for Jameson, is that it enables us to understand cultural works – the artefacts of literature and art – as symbolic resolutions of these tensions, illuminating them with a critical light for analysis and comprehension.[[109]](#footnote-109) This understanding of culture places it in a wider framing, as one part of a complex historical whole. ‘History’ then becomes a ‘totalising narrative’, essential to an understanding of any particular creative work, whilst being itself an inexpressible presence.[[110]](#footnote-110)

*It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity.*[[111]](#footnote-111)

This historically relativising tendency is relevant to Jameson’s appreciation of the psychoanalytical unconscious also. So, where for Freud the unconscious is *a*historical, for Jameson it is intrinsically time-bound; and where for Freud it is libidinal, rooted in desire, for Jameson it is structural, an affect of the social experience of a community. Moreover, the historical and non-libidinal aspects of Jameseon’s unconscious are linked. This becomes clear when we look at his treatment of ‘desire’ as itself historical. So, for Freud, desire - understood as ‘wish-fulfilment’ - arises from the restless id. It is a constant, universal and unrelenting urge towards pleasure-oriented consumption. However, from Jameson’s standpoint desire is understood as a historical creation, bound up with its cultural context, its mediations and its production. It exists through industries that belong to a particular social, political and technological setting. Desire then is never natural; always under capitalism it is manufactured and commodified.

This relativising of desire allows us now to disentangle a non-libidinal unconscious from the essentially sexual expression given it by Freud throughout his works. Freud’s unconscious - the result of repression that is rooted in the sexualised jealousies of early childhood – we can frame as merely one theoretical form of the notion of an unconscious that reflects Freud’s social and cultural environment.[[112]](#footnote-112) Analytically speaking, beneath this we can place a structural unconscious; one that arises from the challenges and complexities we face as we make our way through life in a hostile world. It is something that results from the repressive psychic mechanism that enables us to survive; the blade that cuts and splits the subject into empirical character and individual personality. This general form of repression and the structural unconscious that it creates is helpful for a model-of-mind that traverses each historical mode of mental life. Of this, more later.

Finally, in later work, Jameson locates in the political unconscious residual ideologies that lurk beneath dominant ideologies, whilst newly emergent ideologies rise to compete with and overthrow the ‘ideological dominant’ on a continuously contested terrain. It is the hidden reality of the political unconscious, an opacity lying at the heart of the subjective self, that also makes possible the deceits and manipulations that are the rootstock of ideology.[[113]](#footnote-113) These ‘deceits and manipulations’ – the result of the repression of some forms of consciousness by others - however, are also the key to survival in a world of social threats, competitive calculation, and potential annihilation.

**Marxism and ideology**

Marx's theory of ideology is made up of three different conceptualisations. Each captures a different aspect of the means by which the primary producers of any given type of society are persuaded to accept their position within oppressive class structures. These different conceptualisations are: ‘representation’; ‘material practice’; and ‘appearance’. In *The German Ideology* of 1846 Marx outlines a theory by which ideology represents the dominant ideas of a society, corresponding to the economic interests of its ruling class. In this same work, there is a description of human consciousness in its particular forms that centres material processes of survival as being its source. In later works, and chiefly in *Das Capital*, Marx also elaborates a theory by which ideology constitutes the appearance of the mode of capitalist (and *specifically* capitalist) production; an appearance that, whilst rooted in the lived experience and economic relations of exploitation, also masks its true character with ‘fetishised’ conceptualisations of reality.

*Ideology and representation*

In the *German Ideology*, Marx gives the following account of the role of ideology in society.

*The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an “eternal law.”*

This passage is a much-quoted evocation of the importance of ideas for the power wielded by a ruling class over those it rules and exploits. It states clearly the role that the manipulation of mental life plays within class society. It also suggests a number of mechanisms by which this is brought about. There is the notion of the ‘means of mental production’, by which Marx means the scholastic monasteries of the medieval order, universities, the legal system and the raft of institutions that he was to bring under the rubric of ‘superstructure’. Connected to this is the ‘distribution of ideas’, meaning the popular press and other media, the education system, the pulpit and so forth. These are essentially social mechanisms.

This passage also suggests mechanisms that are closer to our theme; touching upon how Marx conceptualises the mind.[[114]](#footnote-114) Firstly, there is the conversion of social (‘material’) relationships into idealised forms. This is in effect a ‘mystification’ of social reality, and a re-casting of it into a sanitised imaginary construction. This involves a second mechanism, that is the ‘inversion’ of unjust social reality into an unreal notion, reconfigured as ‘just’. To illustrate, we might consider the mystification and inversion of an unequal social structure into an idealised version of it that is centred upon the concept of equality. The third mechanism suggested here is the ‘eternalising’ of such idealisations. Here, the idealised conceptualisations of exploitative social relationships are presented as timeless, fixed and unchanging. This ‘universalisation’ turns realities that belong to a historical era into things of a natural order that cannot be changed; that are invulnerable to human action.

To better understand these ideological mechanisms of mystification, inversion and universalisation, we can trace their development in an earlier work in which Marx interrogates the philosophical categories of Hegel and his followers. This is *The Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* of 1844.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Mystification

In *The Critique* of 1844, Marx points to the tendency in Hegel’s philosophy to elevate abstractions over and above empirical reality; reality becoming derivative of such transcendental entities, rather than being seen as their origin. Central to Hegel’s system is the Idea, expressing itself through various corporeal manifestations in its historical journey towards self-realisation. The Idea, given an ontologically real status as ‘objective spirit’, is the definitive mystification residing at the core of Hegel’s metaphysics.

One result of mystification in Hegel’s philosophy, according to Marx, is that human activity-in-the-world is no longer seen as being real in itself, but rather as being merely real only for the metaphysical demiurge that is the Idea, or *Geist* (‘Spirit’) moving through history. Human activity then, is afforded not an independent reality but, in Marx’s terminology, an ‘allegorical’ status.

*This inversion of subject into object and object into subject is a consequence of Hegel's wanting to write the biography of the Idea ... with human activity ... having consequently to appear as the activity and result of something other than man.*[[116]](#footnote-116)

And consequent upon all of this, where human activity is the result not of human agency, but of a power that stands over and above it, upon which it relies for its historical meaning, freedom disappears. The ethical result of Hegel’s philosophy can only be a dumb acceptance of reality as it is, and as it must be. Hegel’s metaphysics Marx argues, becomes the legitimation of an indifferent cosmology, and a fixed and unchangeable social order.

Inversion

Marx took his analytical technique of inversion from Feuerbach. Feuerbach, in his critique of Christianity, had inverted the relationship between ‘God’ seen as the origin of the world, a real entity to be worshipped, and a humankind held in faithful fealty to its creator. Now, with Feuerbach’s inversion, humankind was seen itself as the source of the content of religious belief, and ‘God’ an imagined construction, created to meet the psychological needs of human beings, but externalised into the structures and rituals of religious veneration. Where ‘God’ had been the subject, and humankind the predicate, now ‘God’ was the idealised predicate of the real historical subject; humankind.

Marx now subjected Hegel’s own logic to this same inversion – or, more precisely *re*-inversion - technique. With respect to Hegel’s formulations of property relations for instance, the person’s right to property is a facet of the working of ‘will’ in history. It is will, embodied in the person, and in the political sense their ‘personhood’, that drives the desire for the possession of, and entitlement to, private property. This, for Hegel, is also the expression and fulfilment of its freedom. Marx argued that this was an inversion. Taking the law of inheritance, primogeniture, as his example, he pointed out that the passing down of landed property to the eldest son was not in fact a matter of choice (‘will’) for the land-owner, but rather a matter of property law. Property then, was not the expression of will in the person; its determination. Rather it was the inverse; the generational passage of landed property resulting from the power of property over will, and inheritance its determined result.

In similar fashion, Marx reworked Hegel’s conceptualisation of the relationship between civil society and the state. For Hegel, the state stood above civil society, and its constituent parts that included economic relations, familial bonds and other types of particular and private interest. The state for Hegel was of a higher order; the embodiment, not of private interests, but of the general interest of the whole of society. It was the expression of a universal principle from which institutions of civil society derived their social meaning and juridical status. Again, for Marx this was an inversion of reality. Rather, civil society was the source of the authority of the state; not the other way around. The state in fact did not stand ‘above’ society, but was rooted in the private interests of the dominant class that it served. Marx had once more re-inverted Hegel; he had found Hegel ‘standing on his head’ and had turned him the ‘right way up’.

*Family and civil society are the presuppositions of the state; they are really active things; but in speculative philosophy it is reversed ... the political state cannot exist without the natural basis of the family and the artificial basis of civil society; they are its* conditio sine qua non*, but (in Hegel) the conditions are established as the conditioned, the determining as the determined, the producing as the product of its product.*[[117]](#footnote-117)

Universalisation

Finally, Marx identifies a tendency in Hegel to find ‘empirical universals’ in what are actually particular interests appearing in an idealised universal form. In his discussion of the Estates of the French Revolution, in Marx’s analysis, Hegel sees in the new bourgeois state the universalised embodiment and ‘general interest’ of the French Republic. Marx argues however, that this is no more than the self-representation of the bourgeoisie to itself and to France as the ‘historical positive’ *contra* the ‘historical negative’ that was the feudal *Ancien Régime*. In the popular tumult that was the 1789 Revolution, whilst the bourgeoise class joined the social churn on the streets of Paris, its real historical interests were always going to prevail.

*No class of civil society can play this role without arousing a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses, a moment in which it fraternizes and merges with society in general, becomes confused with it and is perceived and acknowledged as its general representative, a moment in which its claims and rights are truly the claims and rights of society itself, a moment in which it is truly the social head and the social heart. Only in the name of the general rights of society can a particular class vindicate for itself general domination.*[[118]](#footnote-118)

This raising of the class-interest of a particular - and in this case revolutionary - class, to the status of the interests of the nation, the sum of all the particular interests of civil society, and even to those of humanity in its entirety, are instances in reality of the universalisation of the concrete and selfish interests of a dominant, exploiting class.

These mechanisms – we can say ‘mechanisms-of-the-mind’ – of mystification, inversion and universalisation, together for Marx comprise a mode-of-representation; one that supports the creation of an ideology that rationalises the position of a ruling class, making its dominance a matter of reason.

*Ideology and material practice*

Marx’s observations about the representational content of consciousness – its constructions of reality in the human imagination - illuminate his view of role of social institutions in the manufacture and dissemination of ideology. However, in other passages in his early works, Marx also presents theorisations of ideology as it relates to the material practices constitutive of particular historical societies with the distinctive types of economic activity, behaviours, belief systems and cultures that define them. These are more closely concerned with how ideas and types of consciousness emerge from social processes, their role in society and the ways in which ideologies interact with society as a whole.

In the early passages of *The German Ideology*, Marx describes an ‘efflux’ theory by which ideas emerge from the basic patterns of economic life directly. Here, Marx is emphasising that ideology does not occupy a separate realm from practical life. Rather, the root of human mental production is the life-process itself, the means by which human beings sustain and reproduce their existence. In this account ideas are the “ideological reflexes” and “echoes” of a society’s productive forces and the modes of social interaction that result from it.

*The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises.*[[119]](#footnote-119)

This is a spontaneist explanation for the *origin* of ideas from economic and social practice. There is no need here for the mind understood as an autonomously active element, an agent, in the *creation* of ideas. Instead ideas emerge, preformed from unreflective human activity.

Beyond this emanation of forms of thought from particular historical productive processes, Marx does see ideas as feeding back into these processes, affecting, shaping and even limiting their development. This does again suggest a more active role for ideas in society. In this ‘organic’ account, historical changes are characterised by interactions of ideology with basic productive forces and the processes associated with them.

What Marx terms the ‘theoretical products’ of human material processes, the ideas created by humans as they work upon nature, become interwoven with those same processes. So, historically specific social and ideological forms - of law, politics, religious practice, *etc*. – *correspond* to the specific character of the material processes that sustain life in a given economic form. Moreover, modes of ‘social intercourse’ that arise from definite forms of production also act back upon them, either ‘corresponding’ to them optimally such that they enable the further development of the productive forces in question; or acting obstructively such that they either fetter this potential or are replaced with new social forms; and usually by violence.

Moreover, the interactions of ideology and material practice, indeed the interactions of all the different facets of a social order, meant that a society could be understood, not just analytically, part by part, but as a whole, and in its totality.

As Marx put in, in summary:

*This conception of history depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (i.e. civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history; and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics, etc. etc. and trace their origins and growth from that basis; by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in its totality (and therefore, too, the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another).*[[120]](#footnote-120)

Here the emphasis on ‘totality’ counters any suspicion of reductionism in Marx’s understanding of ideology in this period, the ‘efflux’ model alluded to earlier notwithstanding. All of the parts of a society interact with one another and the society itself is more than the sum of its parts; the totality acting back upon the processes that give rise to it. These interactions moreover are ‘mediated’; that is, they work *via* intermediate structures, processes and social objects.

This logic relies upon the Hegelian category of ‘mediation’. At its most abstract, mediation refers to the third term that reconciles opposing entities, otherwise locked in an irreconcilable tension. The movement that reconciles these opposites occurs *via* an intermediary through which the antagonism is eliminated.

Applied for a materialist analysis this means that Marx’s account of any society can capture the complexity of the interactions between its economic base and the ideas within it. This idea of a ‘mediated totality’ in Marxist theory can be found particularly in the work of the Antonio Labriola within his ‘organic conception of history’.[[121]](#footnote-121)

Finally, in corresponding to the primary mode-of-production of a given society, ideology reflects the mind-set of the class that owns and controls it: the exploiting class. So, whilst corresponding to the material base of a given society, the dominant ideology, aided by the psychological mechanisms of inversion, mystification and universalisation, distorts reality, representing as it does so the interests of the dominant class; and conversely, masking the real interests of the exploited class.

*Ideology and appearance*

The ‘correspondence theory’ of ideology characterised Marx’s writings in his key works from *The German Ideology* of 1846 through to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* of 1859.[[122]](#footnote-122) In the preface to the latter, Marx stated:

*In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.*[[123]](#footnote-123)

In his writings from this point onwards however, a different explanation of ideology begins to enter Marx’s works: one based upon his concept of ‘commodity fetishism’. This was a special case of his more general theory of ‘reification’. Reification resulted from the cognitive transfer of something out of its actual setting in external reality, into an imaginary realm, and experienced as something separate, and intrinsic to itself. This process involved a distortion such that something that is really the effect of objective causes, is now invested in the mind with an independent existence; whilst in fact it originates from things unseen.

It is important to note that reification for Marx was not the result of an ideological trick, nor a simple illusion. Rather it was an objective result of the structural relationships that defined capitalist production. Under capitalism human relations work through the exchange of things; in the form of trade and commerce; and also, in the form of the capital-labour nexus in which each party has something to exchange. What is actually a relationship between human beings becomes seen – becomes *experienced* – as a relationship between things.

*Even from the point of view of the merely formal relation — the general form of capitalist production, which has its less developed mode in common with the more developed — the means of production, the* objective conditions of *labour, do not appear as subsumed under the worker; rather, he appears as subsumed under them. Capital employs labour. Even this relation in its simplicity is a personification of things and a reification of persons.*

*But the relation becomes still more complex — and apparently more mysterious — in that, with the development of the specifically capitalist mode of production, not only do these things — these products of labour, both as use values and as exchange values — stand on their hind legs vis-à-vis the worker and confront him as* “capital” *— but also the social forms of labour appear as* forms of the development of *capital, and therefore the productive powers of social labour, thus developed, appear as* productive powers of capital.[[124]](#footnote-124)

With respect to commodity fetishism, in his critical analysis of political economy, Marx distinguished between the use-value of the commodity and its exchange-value. The use-value was the non-quantifiable practical usefulness of the object or material in question: the value of the plough to till the soil; the value of the bread to meet the need that is hunger; and so on. The exchange value however, lay behind the quantified ratio in which the item could be exchanged with an item of another type. The equivalence that underpinned the exchange ratio lay in the amount of labour involved in the making of each of the commodities, quantified as necessary labour time.

This fundamental feature of the commodity - that it was the embodiment of the socially necessary labour time that had created it – gave it another quite mysterious quality; that of appearing to have a life (we should say a ‘value’) of its own. In other words that its exchange-value on a market of other commodities appeared to be a part of its *essential* character, and something possessed by it. So, although a diamond is of course in nature no more than a crystal of the element carbon, the commercial value of a diamond comes to be seen as a property of the diamond itself, as something that inheres in it. This is the result of the separation of production and consumption under capitalism: production being the labour of the worker required to manufacture (or excavate) the product; consumption being represented by the market upon which the product becomes a commodity.

Furthermore, under capitalism, the worker does not own the product of their labour, this being expropriated from them; and this being the exploitation that defines capitalism. This severing of the process of production from the endpoint of the consumption of the commodity on a market is what causes the opacity of the true nature of the commodity as resulting from exploitation. The commodity *appears* as something of inherent value; this appearance now fetishised as a self-supporting ‘objective’ reality. However, the *essence* of the commodity – its real nature – lies in its reality as the embodiment of exploited labour. It is the appearance of the commodity, the social experience of it as free-floating on its market, unrelated to the human labour that produced it that is the basis of Marx’s theory of ‘commodity fetishism’.

*In order, therefore, to find an analogy we must take flight into the misty realm of religion. There the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.*[[125]](#footnote-125)

The full ideological implications of Marx’s analysis of the commodity becomes clear when he comes to the matter of the labour-capitalist relationship. To understand this, we need to see the worker also as situated in the capitalist market. The worker’s survival after all depends upon their ability to sell their labour to a capitalist who will employ them. Of course, the capitalist owns the wherewithal – the capital - needed to produce goods for sale: the tools; the machinery; the transportation; the buildings; and so on. However, the worker has something the capitalist needs which is the ability to work with these tools and materials – these means of production; this is their ‘labour power’. It is their labour power they must sell; and their labour power then is also a commodity, and one of a special kind because it is expressed always through the activity of a human being.

This all means that the experience the worker has of the labour-capitalist relationship is one of equal exchange. The worker sells their principal commodity, their labour power, for a return: the wage. The wage-labour exchange then has the appearance of a fair bargain. ‘Fair’ here requires a caveat. The worker in fact may see the wage as unfair because it is too low. Then some negotiation or perhaps some industrial struggle may occur that, if successful, raises wages to a level that is experienced as closer to a ‘fair’ rate for the job.

But these very notions of equal exchange and a ‘fair wage’ hide the real character of the exchange; its essential nature. The essence of the worker-capitalist relationship is one of robbery. The capitalist returns to the worker a portion of the value of the labour time for which they are employed; the socially necessary time required to produce a quantity of goods. Thereafter the rest of the worker’s labour time is used to create a further quantity of goods for which they go unremunerated. This time is stolen from the worker and its worth is realised upon the capitalist market as value that is surplus to the need to reproduce the productive cycle from day to day, week to week, *etc*. This is the ‘surplus value’ that becomes the capitalist’s profits, but now demystified and exposed in Marx’s critique for what it truly is: the fruit of the exploitation of the worker.

The commodification of labour provides the basis for Marx’s new theory of ideology. This is because the appearance of the worker-capitalist relationship conceals its essence. Whilst the worker understands the employment relationship as one of equal and fair exchange, it is in fact nothing of the kind. The surplus value that is appropriated by the capitalist is not revealed as such. Rather it is taken from the worker as a hidden quantity, taken in an economic sleight-of-hand worthy of the stage magician; except that it is performed day-by-day, week-by-week, *etc*. for the entirety of the worker’s working life. This means that the appearance in question is not simply an illusion; rather it is structural to the experience of the worker.

So, the ideological distortion involved is constitutive of the perspective of the worker, and the appearance is an ‘objective appearance’. It is different in this sense from the more psychological character of Marx’s earlier correspondence theory of ideology. However, this perspectival distortion forms the primary ideological foundation to the host of secondary tricks, ruses and deceits by which capitalists *via* their ideological servants in the churches, the courts, universities, and so on perpetuate their rule.

**First nature, second nature and the ideology of the ‘given’: Adorno, Horkheimer and Sohn-Rethal**

Adorno had reflected upon first and second nature in his 1932 lecture ‘The Idea of a Natural-History.’[[126]](#footnote-126) Summarising, these concepts referred to human experience that seems to arise from contact with the world of external objects (at different degrees of removal), and with a pre-determined reality that is prior any human activity. Human experience in other words – somatic, cognitive, and aesthetic – that arises directly and indirectly from contact with nature, whether that of the outside world, or that that within us. The ‘ideology critique’ lies in the task of revealing the historical mediations involved, and the inter-subjective constructions really at work, moulded by oppressive social structures and their replications in human thought and behaviour. They are ‘given’ for the individual as they grow and mature through adolescence into adulthood; but are given by society, not ‘nature’ *per se*. Their force lies in their opacity to the person themselves, locked within their historical subjectivity.

Adorno’s early account of the interactions of nature and history was influenced by Lukacs’ considerations of the topic. For Adorno, ‘first nature’ - understood both as external reality and the internal state into which the human being is born – is encountered by the human subject as the world of independent objects and of sensations that the mind takes within itself in conceptual form, so illuminating the transformation of reality as it enters human consciousness. This process of internalisation creates experiences that the person understands (falsely) as ‘natural’. The subject then, encounters the object as something that is inert to it, and that can only be conceptualised in an alienated fashion for the purposes of comprehension and manipulation. Second nature arises from the encounter between the subject’s experience of this first nature, as it comes into self-consciousness, reflective now of its own reified internal states. This essentially Kantian account of the relationship between an apprehending subject and a fixed and unchanging object, interacting only *via* its external properties, gave way to a more Hegelian understanding in Adorno’s later writings with Max Horkheimer in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[[127]](#footnote-127) Here the discussion revolves much more on the transformations involved in the creation of both a first nature that is intended as a comprehension of the world we find in its outward phenomenal form and as our given internal states – our ‘biology’ -, and a second nature that arises from it and that makes up our social being; full of fetishised, commodified and alienated inter-subjective states, again experienced falsely as ‘natural’.[[128]](#footnote-128) So, our first (biological) nature becomes by transformation our second (social) nature. Both are experienced as non-historical and immediate; but both are historically mediated. Neither are independent of human activity; neither are ‘natural’ in the sense suggested by its meaning in the natural sciences. A corollary of this is that as second nature emerges, it does so with the conceptual material provided by a first nature that has already objectified in thought the subject itself - now seen as separate from the world - and that already represents a falsified image of reality. In the construction of the person under capitalism then, ideology is the result of the particular kind of rationality produced by the alienated social relationships that are constitutive of it. For the modern subject, what is achieved by enlightenment in science, is paid for in consciousness by the descent into myth.

The Hegelian approach to conceptualising second nature is more explicit in the work of Alfred Sohn-Rethal. His *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology*, was finished in 1951, although not published until 1973. In it he gives an account of the creation of ‘self’ at particular historical junctures. Its importance lies in the dialectical step it provides towards an explanation of historical modes of human consciousness and behaviour that do not appeal to primordial, biological, or otherwise natural forces. Rather, in Sohn-Rethal’s model, they are result of historical-social processes that are unseen to the subjective self that they construct.[[129]](#footnote-129)

For Sohn-Rethal, the self arises from a ‘circuit’ in which consciousness of the world of external objects becomes internalised as self-consciousness. In his historical discussion, this return of consciousness back to itself with self-awareness, creates meaning from external processes of commodity exchange. Crucially, this meaning is unintended and its origin opaque to the person, for whom the forms of consciousness it produces are experienced as given; as natural.

*The formation of thinking which in every respect merits the term “social” presents itself as the diametrical opposite to society […] Nothing could be wrapped in greater secrecy than the truth that the independence of the intellect is owed to its originally social character.* (Sohn-Rethal, 1978: 72)

The source of this ‘secrecy’ is a bypassing of conscious awareness of the inter-subjectivity involved in the exchange of commodities. The exploitation involved in this commodity exchange is eclipsed, creating an ‘automatic subject’ that is unaware of its social origin. The overall result is what Sohn-Rethal terms a ‘practical solipsism’ by which the self experiences its existence internally, without a necessary acknowledgement of the sociality that in reality and objectively defines it. The self then sees itself as its own creation – the ‘social’ being the external environment in which it finds itself, and which it must navigate as an autonomous cogito.

Again, in relation to commodity-exchange, Sohn-Rethal identifies a ‘real abstraction’ based upon the quantifiable equalising of value, that becomes internalised as an ‘ideal abstraction’ in mental cognition. Such ideal abstractions in turn give rise to the mental categories that create the conditions of consciousness in a given historical context. Sohn-Rethal’s particular interest here is the cognitive faculties of abstract space and time that are the foundations of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, and the conditions of subjective experience within it. In his application of ‘real abstraction’ to mental processes, he also goes on to explain the rise of abstract thinking in 6th Century Greece (consequent upon the introduction of coinage), the foundational categories of modern scientific cognition and the separation of mental from manual labour.

So, from Sohn-Rethal’s circuit that is ‘consciousness-of-world’ to ‘consciousness-of-self’ *via* the unrecognised inter-subjective social interactions involved in commodity exchange, a ‘second nature’ emerges. This second nature is created as the ‘self-aware-self’ becomes co-constituted alongside the concepts that are internalised from the objective world in motion. As a result, the self, though able to reflect upon its own reality, experiences its existence not as the result of the social forces that have actually created it, but rather spontaneously, complete with forms of thinking, modes of cognition and types of feeling that are historically and socially specific.

Finally, in the transformations involved in first nature and second nature there is also the basis of an understanding of social pedagogy, and the transmission of ideology from one generation to the next.[[130]](#footnote-130) For whilst the infant develops within the limitations of first nature, the ‘adult’ world works upon the child with cultural cues, informal communication and formal curricular. They do so *via* the mediations of the second nature that sets the natural expectations of how the child ought to develop, so passing on those mediations to the child as they grow into their own second nature.[[131]](#footnote-131) The transformations involved however, are not only those occurring in the change from first to second nature in the child. They are also occurring in the adult as the reinforcement of these same hidden second nature mediations, converted now into didactic methods for the purpose of cultural transmission.[[132]](#footnote-132)

**Marx’s ‘mind’**

Within Marxism there are different views of the nature of the mind and its relationship with objective reality. Indeed, across the range of Marx’s own published works we have seen there are at least two developed theories of ideology: the theory of the ‘correspondence’ of ideas and forms of consciousness to the processes of production upon which a given society depends; and the explanation of ideology under capitalism that is rooted in the theory of commodity fetishism.

What all accounts of ideology found within Marx and Marxism agree upon however, is that ideology is specific to the type of society to which it belongs, and therefore also specific to its location in history. The human mind then, cannot be understood as a transhistorical phenomenon; there is no *universal* human consciousness. To understand the ‘the mind’, we must understand its society; this being the starting point and the end point of Marx’s historical materialism.

## 

## Comparing notes on Marx and Freud

1. Incompatibility
   1. In their formal logics, the theories of Marx and of Freud are philosophically, methodologically, and anthropologically incompatible.
   2. Freud’s theorising conforms to a type that implicitly seeks verification by ‘narrative concordance’, *viz.* my account of my internal narrative (and that of ‘my patients’) is recognised by an audience, who agree that it accords with their own internal experience of themselves. Similarly, to any speculative system.
   3. Freud was an ‘inconsistent materialist’. In his early career he worked within a ‘mechanist’ paradigm that reduced mental activity to neuronal action. His dream work and instinct model saw his thinking move towards symbolic theory that elevated psychology above any given biological substratum. In his later work Freud employed abstract cosmological principles that moved his theorising towards a type of vitalism.
   4. Freud’s thinking lacks the notion of ‘totality’, causing a tendency to syncretism to resolve theoretical impasses. The notion of ‘totality’ is central to Marxism.
   5. Freud’s theorising tends towards essentialism: Marxism is non-essentialist.
   6. Freud encountered difficulties and impasses in his theory of the human mind that only a Marxist account of the same issues could have resolved, and can resolve today.
   7. There are however areas of resonance between Freud’s speculations and those of Marx. Examples include: the psychological mechanisms of Freud’s dream-theory, and those found in Marx’s theory of ideology; the descriptions of psychical introjection and internalisation found in Freud and Marx respectively; and the splitting of the ego in Freud’s structural model-of-mind, and the splitting of the subject in Marx’s dialectic-of-self.
2. Acknowledgement
   1. Marxists can recognise in Freud a courageous thinker who breached the boundaries of bourgeois respectability in his earnest endeavours to understand humanity. Specifically, Freud’s recognition of prepubescent psychosexual development, his identification of the role of the unconscious in the life of the person and his focus upon repression as a source of neurosis and human misery are important for understanding the human experience.
   2. Marxism is not a self-enclosed theoretical system and can absorb scientific insight from any empirical field to illuminate the world and better understand humanity *e.g.* Engels made use of the anthropological insights contained in *Ancient Society* (1877) by Lewis H.Morgan; Marx admired Darwin’s work on evolution. *Acknowledgment* of the achievements of science (including the human sciences) outside of Marxism, is a part of Marxism.
   3. Marxism can incorporate insights from the Freudian theory-of-mind, retheorising and integrating them to complete and strengthen some aspects of its account of ideology.
   4. Freud’s psychology (as opposed to his early neurological work or his later vitalism) is potentially useful for Marxism for the purposes of providing a full account of the mind-in-society, historical consciousness and ideology. Freud offers a model-of-mind.
   5. Those aspects of Freud’s theoretical system that Marxists can critically reflect upon and potentially learn from, include:
      1. an account of mind;
      2. a non-reductionist (non-biological), symbolic theory-of-mind and human behaviour;
      3. a set of descriptive psychological facets, mechanisms and processes;
      4. an account of object-internalisation (concrete; ego-related) and object-identification (abstract; super-ego-related);
      5. an account of gender and genderising socio-psychological mechanisms.
      6. The significance of an active unconscious.
      7. The theorisation of mental repression.
3. Psychology
   1. Marxism contains a psychology. This is derived from Hegel’s philosophy of subjective spirit.
   2. The Marxist ‘correspondence’ (‘representation’) theory of ideology contains psychological mechanisms that are comparable in type to many found in Freud’s theory of dreams, parapraxis and normal psychology.
   3. Marxism offers a mechanism of instantiation that roots the person in their particular social, cultural and technological context. This is the dialectic-of-self.
4. Mind
   1. Despite the psychological content of Marx’s and Engels’ theorising of ideology, an explicit *model*-of-mind is difficult to locate across their published works.
   2. Without a model-of-mind explaining the creation of the individual and also of gender in the person, is problematic.
   3. Marxism does however, contain the elements of such a model including: the Hegelian dialectic of subjective spirit, and recognition/mis-recognition: the dialectic-of-self in Marx’s early works; the dialectic of the ‘concrete and the abstract’ found in Vygotsky’s model of concept formation, and the genesis of the capacity for full concept formation (abstraction) with puberty; *etc.*
   4. This is a general scheme that analytically anticipates Freud’s theory of gender formation - the introjection-identification dialectic that determines gender in the Freudian model.
   5. The mind strives to integrate sensory-input and concept to orientate in the world. Where integration is impossible, where reality confronts the mind, where previously integrated conceptualisations decompose, where object defies concept, there aggression begins; the urge to destroy what is real, to restore conceptual harmony.
   6. Freud’s model-of-mind does not require validation or otherwise from Marxism. It can be treated (as Trotsky would have us say) as a hypothesis. That is to say, it can be accorded a scientific status, without necessarily any further validating commitment.
   7. Freud’s hypostatises mental constructions such as the Oedipus complex, seeing them as universal. Marxism cannot accept a ‘universal’ mind, beyond an abstracted and contentless form.
   8. For Marxism, any model-of-mind must be historicised. This becomes a ‘mode-of-mind’, belonging to a mode-of-production and a mode-of-consumption. Marx’s dialectic-of-self, combined with the co-dependence of production and consumption, provides a mechanism by which a historical mode-of-mind can emerge with each epoch, underpinning the types of sexual behaviour, gender and social attachments that characterise it.
   9. A mode-of-mind can be theorised along intersecting axes: i. productive relations (work patterning; mode-of-production); ii. reproductive-relations (family patterning; mode-of-consumption); iii. introjection-identification; and iv. the dialectic-of-self.
   10. There are examples of societies with modes-of-mind that are different to those we see today under capitalism. (*cf.* Malinowski, Mead)
5. The unconscious
   1. Marx’s ‘representation’ theorising of ideology implies a notion of a structural (social) unconscious - an organised ‘forgetting’. Marx provides social mechanisms for this in his ‘representation’ (or ‘correspondence’) and ‘commodity-fetishism’ theories of ideology.
   2. In Freud the unconscious is a restless and vital force. There is no sense of this in Marx. Rather, the implied (and un-theorised) unconscious in Marx can best be understood as a reservoir of latent (implicitly repressed) mental material; and an (epistemic, perceptual) effect of mind rather than being itself a cause.
6. Repression
   1. Marxism does not contain an explicit theory of or mechanism for mental repression.
   2. In Marxist theory the notion of a ‘repressed unconscious’ is implicit in key concepts such as alienation, reification, commodity fetishism, *etc.* It is not explicit. In Freud it is an explicit construct, given primary importance.
   3. Marx’s ‘commodity fetishism’ theory of ideology does not require a mechanism of repression of mental material, in-so-far as it is premised upon the construction of appearance. It does however require the repression of critical thought that might otherwise tear down the misrepresentations involved.
   4. Conflict within the person is recognised by both Freud and Marx. For Freud this is the result of: i. the internalised family drama and ii. the eternal and structurally conflicted character of the psyche. For Marx it is the internalised conflicts of class society. (An example of a convergence between Marx and Freud at the level of phenomena; but a divergence at the level of theorisation).
   5. Internalisation of the conflicts of class society is the source (though not the mechanism) of repression. The absence of this concept in Freud’s thinking led to his inability to understand repression as a social and political phenomenon.
   6. One mechanism of repression can be hypothesised as based upon intentionality.

*Thesis*: All mental content is directly or indirectly an orientation in relation to external reality.

*Antithesis*: Reality does not allow for all such mental content to find expression in external action (due to risks, threats, prohibitions, *etc*.); orientations in the world can be mutually excluding; orientations can also be away from the world, a retreat from painful reality *e.g.* religion, narcissism, etc,

*Synthesis*: Some mental contents must be repressed, to allow others to become dominant for survival.

* 1. For the general ‘model-of-mind’ the repression of some mental contents in order that others may become strategically dominant is the basis of a ‘social materialism’ that serves as a mediating third term in theory, between materialism at the historical scale, and the emergence of the personal (empirical) self as a specific ‘mode-of-mind’.
  2. This provides a (hypothetical, non-Freudian) mechanism for the creation and maintenance of a repressed (non-libidinal) unconscious.

1. Biology
   1. Freud’s model provides an example of how gender (and other aspects of personal behaviour) can be explained without any recourse to any biological determination, whether complex or reductionist.
   2. The liminal position of an inferred non-mediated contact with the objective world introduces the notion of an abstracted *limit* to consciousness; and an equally abstracted *origin* of sensory input to consciousness. The point at which sensation enters consciousness is simultaneously a moment of change as conceptual mediation begins. Conceptual mediation brings its own dynamic; it is not passive. Mediation *works* upon its object. (Consider ‘active labour’, *contra* Feuerbach).
   3. Somatic sensory input is a special case of material flow into consciousness; though still actively mediated (by socialisation, by ideology, by identity, by gender, *etc.*).
   4. An aspect of conceptual mediation is *interpretation* of somatic sensory input. This means that mediated (interpreted) sensory input, experienced spontaneously as ‘natural’, being ‘of nature’, can be returned in the form of ideologically guided behaviour, experienced (spontaneously) as ‘human nature’. This applies to sex and to gender.
   5. So, bodily sensation flows into consciousness and is separated from its liminal point of origin by a conceptualising process (mediation-interpretation) and returned to the body as ‘natural feeling’, ‘instinctive impulse’, ‘involuntary desire’, *etc.* Ideology accesses and mobilises the autonomic nervous system.
   6. Ideology does not create sensory input; it does however create its meaning. It is the *meaning* of sensory input (its interpretation) that guides behaviour.
   7. This is addressed in theory by the concepts of ‘first nature’ and ‘second nature’ found in Marxism.
2. Determination
   1. ‘Social determination’ is of two orders: outward and obvious; inward and opaque (sedimented and experienced spontaneously as natural).
   2. Beneath structure (symbol) there is fluidity *cf.* Vygotsky’s concept of ‘inner speech’, that fluctuates between ‘the word’ and wordlessness. A ‘semioplasm’ (thinking in ‘meaning’).
   3. The mediating concepts and mechanisms that interpret somatic-sensory input are drawn from others (society; *cf.* Lacan). Mind is (unlike the brain) a relational object.
   4. This dispenses with the need for biology (complex and reductionist) as explanatory for any specific social behaviour.
3. Gender
   1. Marx’s theory of the co-dependence of production and consumption can be mobilised to analyse socialisation, enculturation and genderising under capitalism. This involves an expansion of the meaning of the term ‘consumption’ to cover the construction of the self and of identity; consumption being understood now as the manner by which the individual orientates in their world in their non-productive human relations. The person ‘consumes’ in a capitalist market-place of material and social goods (including sex), and life-strategies (including gender). These are co-dependent with production.
   2. The co-dependence of production and consumption, applied to gender, provides a means by which genderising tropes and trends can be explained.
   3. The ‘empirical-self’ does not conform mechanically to this analytical framework; rather in its development it moves between these organising domains, that nonetheless set the terms for its development.
   4. Family-type(s) can be placed under mode-of-consumption, and positioned for Marxism as a primary site of psycho-sexual development. Family structure changes with changing productive relations, allowing for a historical treatment of sex and gender. This borrows elements from the Freudian model, whilst refashioning them within overarching Marxist categories.
   5. Marx’s dialectic-of-self offers a general model of gender and genderising processes at the social scale.
   6. This is also true of all other domains: culture; taste; sexuality; *etc.* Each have their historical mode beneath phenomenal variation.
   7. Gender is a material practice; an orientation in the world.
   8. The behavioural structure of gender is relational; and gender is a relational object. It exists between persons and within social structure.
4. Tradition
   1. Mental repression applies also to class, tradition and the ‘control’ of history. It applies, because to hold on to traditions of struggle and revolution brings risk in the face of threats and antagonism.
   2. However, the repressed can ‘return’. There is ‘compression’. This is true of the person, and it is true of the group and/or class. ‘Return’ depends upon the structure of the social context and that of the episode. When past and present unite, knowledge, stories and narratives ‘forgotten’, can reappear to consciousness, and to the tongue.

**Part II: A Marxist model-of-mind: a hypothesis and its consequences**

Finding the mind in Marx

Marxism emerged from the crisis of Hegelian philosophy, and as a result is rich with psychological themes. Indeed, the psychological mechanisms in Marx’s theorising of ideology in the 1840s – inversion, mystification and universalisation – are comparable in theoretical status to those of Freud’s theorising of neuroses and dreams in the early 1900s – with processes such as condensation, displacement, *etc.* They are inferred from externally observable phenomena: historical analysis in the case of Marx; neurotic symptomologies and dream narratives in the case of Freud. That one set of mechanisms belongs to the analysis of history, and the other (merely) to that of the therapist’s surgery is secondary. Both are aspects of different understandings of the human mind.

Unlike Freud, Marx did not develop an explicit model of the human mind in the way of structure, or underlying articulation. In one sense this flows from his methodological starting point: the ensemble of social relations. Marx, as we have seen, begins with the whole of society, and works back to the individual as an endpoint, the final node of a chain of social causalities. However, without a general model-of-mind the processes by which external social factors become integrated into the interior life of the individual to create a personal mind cannot be brought into focus. Social effects can be finely traced and applied for the comprehension of real events and personal dramas, of course. And this is the substantive character of much left-leaning sociological work. However, without an account of the psychological mechanisms that internalise the influences entering the life of the individual, the forces that create the emergent human mind remain unresolved in analysis of social phenomena and historical change.

There are recurring questions and controversies within Marxism that are in part at least connected to this enduring issue. Adequately explaining the power of ideology to create deep mental rivers of irrationalism that fly in the face of reality, is one example. Fully accounting for the external and internal drivers of human sexual behaviour and gender, is another. Understanding the nuances of mental illness and individual pathology is yet another. Often, attempts to provide answers in these areas resort to ‘complexity’ as a cover for the theoretical lacuna that is bedevilling them; or appeal to a ‘dialectical’ take on things, that is really an evasion of the concrete matter at hand.

Historically this issue has also been at the root of a fissure within Marxism itself, causing a bifurcation into two ‘Marxisms’: one that emphasises objective economic and structural causalities that are external to the individual; and another that emphasises instead the role of subjective agency and historical decision. Each historical iteration of these conundrums and impasses revolves on the missing ‘third term’ - the model-of-mind that is difficult to locate within Marxism. The elements required for the construction of a model-of-mind however are present within Marxism at its philosophical roots. The job of making explicit this otherwise implicit construction, is helped by the particular theoretical element of ‘repression’; a factor that is foregrounded in psychoanalysis, but traceable only as an implicit element within Marxism.

This use of repression as an explanatory factor in the formation of mind works at the level of ‘strategy-for-survival’ as the individual grows towards their destiny within the total society of which they are a part. The emergence of personal identity within a community is one aspect of this, as some potential characteristics are eclipsed and pushed out of consciousness as possibilities for the person, whilst others become established as dominant, socially successful and rooted in personality; gender being one especially important example of this. The operative processes here, revolving as they do around questions of strategy and survival, constitute a type of materialism – ‘social materialism’ – that involves the repression of risk-prone possibilities for the person. The result is a type of mind that is premised upon the eclipsing of entire ways of thinking, believing and feeling, and its appearance to its owner as natural. And the psychological material that is repressed in this model need not have been entirely extinguished, but rather may exist as a residual element that whilst lost to the person’s conscious mind, remains to create conflictual tensions and anxieties that are unfathomable to the person themselves. Finally, this mode-of-mind must derive from a more general model-of-mind that operates over and above its particular social context; and in a way that links effectively to materialism at the historical scale.

**Risk, the mind, and ‘social materialism’.** Orientations towards the world involve assessments of risk, both existential and social. The imperative demands of survival, whether in body or in social role and position, entail navigations of treacherous terrain and strategies for the avoidance of harm and social threat. These in turn are premised upon decisions that are defining for the individual as much as for the group; so, forming primary strategies of social organisation and personal identity. From these, myriad secondary and tertiary strategies emerge, that form the substance of group socialisation, familial interaction and daily coping for the individual. Where some strategies become dominant, along with their accompanying behavioural modes and identifications, others that are incompatible with them must be repressed. The management of risk for the purpose of survival and success for the individual in their allotted social role, is a ‘social materialism’ that connects materialism at the historical scale with the creation of the personal mind.

Elements of a Marxist model-of-mind

The first component of a Marxist model-of-mind must be the positioning of ‘mind’ as a historically relative phenomenon. For this, we are helped by Marx’s discussion of the co-dependence of capitalist ‘production’ and ‘consumption’ in the essays of the *Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*: the *Grundrisse* (1857-8).

Marx posits production and consumption as two moments in a cycle of economic activity; moments that mediate one another, and that are co-determining. Whilst production in an obvious sense determines the products of labour, the goods that will take their places upon the capitalist market, it is consumption that gives them their destination. Without consumption the product of labour is inert, an object without meaning. So, whilst production creates the object, it is consumption that creates the commodity.

The distinction between production and consumption affects the human being as much as the commodity itself. Whilst in their labour - occupying their place in the capitalist chain of production - the individual is a worker, their role as consumer is positioned instead outside of productive processes. In their consumption they are a member of a community, part of a faith-group, a citizen (assuming a democratic polis), and so on. They are a person; impoverished, exploited and oppressed perhaps, but a person nonetheless. And the consumer does not consume in a vacuum; rather, their consumption is contextual and is mediated socially, culturally, geographically, and ideologically. Moreover, consumption happens through a unit-of-consumption, that is reflected with tedious regularity today in advertising tropes. It may be the individual, but is just as likely to be the young couple or the nuclear family. In terms of the logic of capitalism, consumption provides the domain in which the person is constructed.

Consumption is also transactional. Of course, there is the ‘corner shop-model’ of the relationship between the purchaser (the consumer; the private individual), and the seller (the supplier; the shop-worker), with a shop-counter between them. In reality of course, the ‘private’ individual is manipulated by a very public retail industry; and the ‘shop-worker’ is a proxy for the company that exploits them, and that has the major share in the price of the product at the end of a long chain of production and transportation. We should also add that the ‘counter’ is just as likely today to be a screen on a smart phone. But it is the *transactional* character of the relationship that is important, regardless of setting.

More to the point, this transactionalism seeps into every aspect of our experience within the realm of consumption. To take the most intimate area of human experience, sexual coupling, transactional interactions abound. Once the closed rural communities of late feudal society had been ripped apart, uprooted, and scattered by the enclosures of the early capitalist era, people have had to purchase the opportunity to meet. Beyond the workplace (important of course) there has been ‘the dance’, ‘the fair’, ‘the outing’, ‘the lonely-hearts page’ and so on. Today, there is the nightclub, the 18-30 holiday, and the dating-site. Whilst some may hold out for the romantic encounter whilst walking in the park, the reality for the great majority of people is that meeting one another is an activity that generates a profit for someone who isn’t there. And if the goal is to finally arrive at something stable, that works for the longer term, then the transactions involved go to new levels of entanglement, financial commitment and indebtedness, as the successful couple take up their given role as a functioning unit-of-consumption.

This world of transactions is a difficult terrain, and the psychological contortions and alienated emotional states involved in navigating it are harmful to health and happiness. At every turn, human relating is mediated by commerce. This is one explanation for the sub-cultures and alternative identities that emerge as strategies of avoidance of, and refuge from the unattractive prospect of consumption in the mainstream of capitalist society. The daunting challenge of conquering the obstacle-course that is the pathway to personal enjoyment of another, and fulfilment in a life of mutual endeavour, requires learnt knowledge and social skilling that for most begins in the second and third decades of life.

In this short-hand account of the coupling game, there is one aspect that must be emphasised: its historically specific character. The description just given of course reflects the way of things as they emerged in the late Twentieth Century and early Twenty-first Century in western capitalist societies. For a fuller picture we would also have to factor in changes to family structure, demographic change, cultural trends, human migration, *etc.* In each phase of such a historical timeline, changes in socialising structures and expanding opportunities of livelihood and cultural space in wider society would become constitutive of the strategies available for personal survival and success. Crucially, shifts from rural extended family structures, to the familial anarchy of the early industrial era, to the urban nuclear family of the first decades Twentieth Century, through to the breakdown of that family type and the rise of increasingly work-oriented family formations of the later Twentieth Century, and on to the diversified family types of today, have each in turn provided strategies of gender and coupling that are dominant over others that have become suppressed by society and - for most - repressed out of consciousness

So, all aspects of mental structure, belong to particular historical eras. This means that where we talk about a *mode*-of-production, and a *mode*-of-consumption, we must also talk of a *mode*-of-mind that, whilst it is made possible by the general model-of-mind (or capacity-for-mind) that we are working towards, is nonetheless historically specific. This will bring us shortly to the second component of our general model-of-mind: the dialectic-of-self.

**The variable mind**

As a prerequisite to a discussion of the dialectic-of-self, we will consider the variability of the human mind. That the human mind *is* highly variable is a truism. It is a familiar enough observation in geographical and historical comparisons of human culture. However, what is proposed here is that the variability of the human mind is limitless.

For such a statement to hold up, we need to consider more than the outward, phenomenal aspect of the mind, its manifest expression in social behaviour. Rather we require a hypothesis about its fundamental character. For that, we will describe the mind (and by necessary implication, the brain) as having self-organising totipotency. In so-doing, we are suggesting the notion of the mind as an entity that has the potential to create its own operative rules, the principles by which it regulates itself, and psychical systems underlying conscious mental processes. This totipotency means that the mind is meta-logical, able to reconfigure not only the obvious processes of thought, but also the modes of thinking that make them possible within particular forms of rationality. The logic and systems of mind in this interpretation can themselves be altered, replaced and jettisoned; or equally promoted into dominant mental forms, relegated to subordinate ones and even ‘folded’ within other logics and systems into densely organised psychical structures. To this we should add the mind’s propensity for abstraction from experience, interpretation and symbolism, as well as its ability to resolve mental paradox by higher reasoning. The capacity for such variable patterning, recursion and parallactic arrangements in the assembling, disassembling, and reassembling of mental content is the basis, not only of human intelligence, creativity, and scientific thinking, but also the root of the structural flexibility of the mind in a historical sense, and of human adaptability itself. This also means that the sheer range of conceptual possibility far exceeds the material possibilities of the environments normally experienced by human beings; this imaginative redundancy with respect to practical tasks, finding expression in religious ornament, artistic fantasy, scientific hypothesis and abstract symbolism; this being also the meaning of ‘limitless’ in this context.[[133]](#footnote-133) Moreover, we can infer types of variability that, at any one moment in historical time, defy available linguistic description or adequate hypothesis; ‘the mind’ then constituting a ‘front’ that can move ahead of conscious apprehension. Finally, we must include the ability of the mind to *fix* its underlying structures into the stable and enduring systems of thinking, cultural habit and emotional regulation that we recognise as cultural-historical types, and psycho-mimetic symbolic representations of reality existing at the pre-conscious level. In other words, we must understand the general capacity of the human mind to create a historically specific *mode*-of-mind.

What such a mode-of-mind might consist of for a particular type of society is a matter of anthropological and archaeological investigation. Marx was certainly interested in this topic, as his studies of non-capitalist societies found in the hundreds of pages of his *Ethnological Notebooks* testify. At the most general level we can identify cyclical modes of thinking as compared to linear, object-related forms of knowledge compared to abstract and transferable types of reasoning, ways of thinking rooted in place compared with those associated with movement, and so on. In the ancient world for instance the notion of change at the centre of the prevailing cosmology was quite different from our own. At the time of 4th Century BC Greece for example, peoples’ sense of ‘future’ was essentially repetitive, and did not stray far beyond agricultural cycles.[[134]](#footnote-134) The mental ‘temporal scheme’[[135]](#footnote-135) that characterises a society has a profound effect, not only on culture but also on cognition. The fact that the astronomers of ancient Greece for instance believed the heavens to be immutable meant that they did not record (did not ‘see’) extraordinary stellar events such as supernova and new comets, that were observed and recorded in other parts of the world.

We can also identify different kinds of human relationship that are the social aspect of the mode-of-mind of a type of society: ‘relationships’ with ancestors;[[136]](#footnote-136) inter-generational relationships; sex and gender relationships; kinship relationships; self-society relationships; and so on. What any one of these modalities presupposes of course, is a general model-of-mind that provides the basic capacities for it to emerge and become fixed into an enduring mental type.

**Historical brain; prehistorical brain.** There is an important distinction to be made between the ‘pre-historical brain’; and the ‘historical brain’. The brain has changed over time. However, for this statement to purposeful we must be clear about the spans of time we mean, and therefore also the rates - and types - of change. For example, over durations of millions of years we can see from the casts of skulls in the pre-historic record that the brains of our hominid ancestors evolved language and speech centres essential to the emergence of human social organisation. We know also that the cerebellum, the region of the brain that controls the sensory and motor functions essential to tool-making and -use, has expanded over hundreds of thousands of years. However, these sorts of gross structural change, essential to the general capacity of the brain for higher mental functions, are quite different to the changes involved for instance in the learning of specific tasks, habituation to specific environments and enculturation within specific communities. The latter will occur in the pre-frontal cortex – the site of higher reasoning, abstract thought and personality - over spans of time that define the life courses of individuals and the inter-generational histories of communities. This latter type of change represents the changing brain in its historical sense. Such changes may well involve changes to neural networks, with variations of local brain function responding to external pressures, material influence, or repeated stimulation. They are nonetheless, changes that occur over relatively short, non-evolutionary, periods of time.

To the extent that we can be sure, we can say the general model-of-mind that characterises modern human beings came into existence during the Middle to Upper Palaeolithic periods, between 35,000 and 45,000 years ago.[[137]](#footnote-137) By this era, the Archaic Human Neanderthals and Denisovans have disappeared from the archaeological record. We also see over this small window of archaeological time a ‘Creative Explosion’, evidenced by the discovery of ritualistic and cultural artefacts at the excavation sites of *H. s. sapiens.*[[138]](#footnote-138) The parietal art of the caves of Tuc d’Audoubert, Chauvet and Lascaux for example, depicting abstract patterns,[[139]](#footnote-139) non-literal petroglyphs and therianthropes,[[140]](#footnote-140) as well as hunting scenes, uses types of symbolic expression that we can recognise as non-literal, as opposed to being purely object-based.

The relative abundance of artefacts containing artistic decoration that transcends the technical skills required for hunting and tool-based manufacture found in the Upper Palaeolithic archaeological record, suggest a leap in human cognitive capacity. The nature of this leap is the subject of speculation based on very scant material evidence. One hypothesis comes from Steven Mithen’s ‘cathedrals of intelligence’ model.[[141]](#footnote-141) Here, the ‘chambers’ of the cathedral represent different types of intelligence: technical; linguistic; social; and natural-historical. Before the Transition, goes Mithen’s argument, these chambers were blocked from one another, with no communication between them being possible. At some point, and probably many, the neurological door-less walls that had separated these chambers came down, unleashing cascades of connections and pathways, that released in turn new waves of generalisable intelligence, creative expression and inventive ability.

Whatever the material detail of this shift, the effect that is important for our model-of-mind, is that the changes involved, and therefore the biological (brain) substrate created, made possible new orders of variety in human technique, socialisation, and cultural formation.[[142]](#footnote-142) It is the radical variability of the human mind that makes possible the dialectic-of-self that in turn creates, and continuously recreates, the mode-of-mind typical of a given society. It is this general property, considered as an aspect of the model-of-mind that we are working towards, that allows the historically specific mind to come into existence.

**The dialectic-of-self**

We have seen previously that for Marx conscious human labour creates a dialectic that gives rise to an awareness of self. As the task of labour is envisioned, the self, orienting towards its end-goal, the product of the work-to-be-done, comes to regard itself as an object. Thus, the self duplicates itself in thought as it performs its tasks in the world. This object-for-itself of the subject, is the result of the internalisation and mobilising of social and technical skills, social and cultural orientations, empirical and theoretical knowledge, and forms of belief, interpretation and ideology.

This is the social character of labour in a specific historical context. It is the basis of the self-consciousness of the human subject as they become a person in their cultural-historical setting. It is also pivotal for sexual identification as early realisations about economic and social destinies (and also the consequences of failure) take on the connected gendered aspects special to each; gender again understood as having strategic meaning for technical function, family position and personal bonding.

Again, there is a resonance with Freud’s account of mental processes. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud had proposed the process of introjection by which the ego internalises an object of its desire, to have and to own it within itself, within the psyche. This introjection of the object into the ego, comparable to Hegel’s ‘real within the ideal’,[[143]](#footnote-143) forms the basis of gendering attachments in Freud’s discussion. Abstracting from it, we can see here a process of more comprehensive significance, as something that commands also social and emotional regulation in the world, enculturation and personal equilibrium; a mechanism by which the individual positions themselves in their world for the purposes of survival, social bonding and temporal orientation. Freud however, is concerned not only with the desire to possess, and its regulation, but also the person’s need to *be*; their tendency to *become*, so forming an identity in an autopoietic process of ego-idealisation.

The similarity of these two accounts is striking. It appears that a dynamic that Marx recognised in human labour, Freud recognised in gendering processes. As the human subject pushes out into the world, it incorporates elements of external reality as objects into itself in a process of internalisation-introjection: for the purposes of labour in the case of Marx; and the purposes of coupling and attachment in the case of Freud. But, more than this, in both of these accounts, the result is a separation of a subject (Marx) or ego (Freud), into a self-conscious subject or a super-ego respectively.

We can see it in the following way: the ‘subject’ internalises the world simultaneously as it reaches out into it, whether as an infant developing cognitively during normal growth, or as an adult working upon nature; in the process an objective subject, or alternatively, a ‘subject-for-itself’ emerges by which the human subject comes to regard itself, and to know itself. It is the ‘intended self’ towards which it strives. The ‘I’ produces an ‘I*o*’ (‘*o*’ for ‘object’). The mechanism involved is of necessity historical; it is a historically relativising process that employs the culturally mediating artefacts to hand as it internalises productive and social technique; it is the site of mediation. It also represents a gendering process as the adolescent begins to intuit their future place in their society, and the social strategies they need to acquire if they are to succeed in the transitions required of them. And it is infused with ideology; all the mediating factors being culturally and socially specific.

**Language, repression and culture.** Many important theorists of human consciousness, and especially of the relationship between brain and mind, have focused upon language to propose ways in which sensory perception and cognitive apprehension of the external world is represented in the mind, to then emerge as symbolic thought, identification and reasoning. Freud’s concept of ‘word-sense’ for example reflects this concern. The Marxist psychologist Lev Vygotsky especially, accorded language acquisition a central mediating function in the incorporation of culture in the mind and life of the developing child. Language, understood as a primary means of enculturation, may also provide a ‘fixing mechanism’ by which some strategies of risk management and survival that become dominant by the repression of others cognised as less reliable or more risk-prone, become cemented into the social constructions that give solidity to social aggregations and total social structure.

This latter aspect to our dialectic-of-self, understood as a mediated process of activity and personal change, is close to Vygotsky’s theorising of the acquisition of the ‘psychological tool’ in the development of the child or young person. Distinguishing this from the ‘technical tool’ by which the person works upon an external object, Vygotsky emphasises the total alterations of internal mental state and behaviour that psychological tools introduce as the developing person achieves self-mastery, and self-regulation to become effective as a producer and social actor.

*The most essential feature distinguishing the psychological tool from the technical one is that it is meant to act upon mind and behaviour, whereas the technical tool, which is also inserted as a middle term between the activity of man and the external object, is meant to cause changes in the object itself. The psychological tool changes nothing in the object. It is a means of influencing one’s own mind or behaviour or another’s. It is not a means of influencing the object. Therefore, in the instrumental act, we see activity towards oneself, and not towards the object.*[[144]](#footnote-144)

Considering the calculations of risk and survival involved, the dialectic-of-self represents a contextual social-materialism, embedded within a more general historical-materialism. We will add here finally Vygotsky’s insight: that of the factor of language in enculturation; and the role of ‘the word’ as the mediating artefact (of a special type) incorporating the symbolism and abstract thought by which the subject becomes a self-aware person, whilst simultaneously fixing the results of the dialectic-of-self as a stable social construction.

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Description automatically generated

I = The self, experienced as ‘I’

I*o* = The intended self, experienced as the ‘objective I’

Where the cycle of this dialectic is completed, where the I*o* ‘returns’ to the I, then the process is one of ownership of self by the subject, of labour by the producer, of fulfilment, and even of liberation. Where this cycle is interrupted by obstacles of class, oppression and external control, then this cycle is blocked, meaning that I*o* cannot so return; it is objectified and owned by another. The result is exploitation, and arising directly from this, alienation: alienation that is of the self, experienced by the individual in their personhood in the realm of consumption, and the objectified self, lost to them in the realm of production.

Moreover, this cycle, whether completed as personal fulfilment or blocked in an alienated failure of fulfilment, also involves cognition: that is the person ‘sees’ the cycle in which they are enmeshed. *How* they see things will in turn be a matter of interpretation: they may see things as they really are; or they may see things through an ideological lens that distorts their understanding. And such interpretations will influence assessments of risk, calculations of success and survival, the strategic choices and resulting behaviours that emerge; and the associated identifications that are either foregrounded as dominant, or are repressed.

With this last point we move from a theoretical framework to what we will term the ‘empirical self’, that does not remain obediently within our categorical boundaries. Our placing of the personal self for instance, within the mode-of-consumption does not mean that the person’s experience as a producer cannot also be involved in the formation of their mind, identification and personality. Indeed, the world of work can be and often is a major influence upon outlooks, attitudes to life and personal behaviour. However, it is in their role as consumer that their personhood is socially-intended - and *pressured* - to develop. In work, the role of personality and ‘mind’ understood as authentic self, is suppressed to one degree or another. It is the tension this creates for the self in their roles within each domain, that provides the field in which the empirical self emerges: either in flight from the world of work into identifications of family, region, religion or pastime; or as an embracing of work in identifications of vocation, profession, individual advancement, or trade union commitment.

**‘Differentiated social determination’.** ‘Social determination’ itself is a familiar enough term of Marxist social analysis, based upon the tracing of external structural causes for mind-sets, social orientations, cultural beliefs and so forth. However, the idea of social determinations of different orders, some being more or less obvious, or more or less opaque than others, is less so. So, whilst outward social causes of internal affective states can be recognised and analysed as such, causes that become internalised or introjected to create a substratum of determinations within the life of the person, whilst they have their origin in external social processes, can work as hidden forces that are experienced as ‘natural’. The concept of ‘repression’, familiar in the psychoanalytical tradition, provides a means by which this proposition can made comprehensible as an alternative to the physicalist tendencies of dialectical biology when it is applied in discussions of human consciousness.

At this point Marx and Freud part ways on the factor of ‘repression’ as an explicit factor. The repression of traumatic experience in Freud’s model-of-mind creates the ‘system pre-conscious’ - a sedimentation of mental material that remains as an active and disruptive psychological presence. Freud’s model emerged of course from studies of neurosis and his conceptualisations and terminology reflect this. However, detached from its originating conceptual ecology, this theoretical construct conjures up the intriguing notion of an internal basal layer of social determination that, whilst it is opaque to the conscious mind, nonetheless works as a force in the life of the individual, and that they experience as something that is simply a part of themselves, that is natural; the primary rootstock of personality.

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Description automatically generated

***r***= Repression

***sd i*** = Internal social determination

By integrating this theoretical element Marxism as a historical discourse can go much further than Freud’s application of it, limited as that was to the mind of the individual seen as a social isolate. For Marxism, it supports a proposition; that of a mechanism by which a general model-of-mind can produce a specific mode-of-mind. This does require a refashioning of Freud’s concept. Freud’s notion of repression, we know, is intrinsic to his *libidinal* model of the human psyche, and an unconscious rooted in early sexualised childhood trauma. However, this is positioned here as merely one historical example of this dynamic, describing aspects of a particular family form. Repression, along with the unconscious that is its consequence, is framed now as a more fundamental psychical mechanism that makes possible many types of unconscious and many forms of consciousness. Its character is no longer seen as essentially libidinal; the form that Freud’s understanding of the psyche requires. Moreover, whereas for Freud, repression provides an account of the way in which painful experience is managed by the mind, for a Marxist model-of-mind it can provide a means by which a mode-of-mind can become embedded; in other words, it can explain the historical structuring of the mind.

We should note at this point that the term ‘repression’ itself comes with the caveat that it implies a mechanism that may not exist in reality. The idea that something is actively ‘pushed down’ into a structure (that Freud called the unconscious) is only one way to hypothesise the mechanism involved. It may be that our phenomenon is in fact an aspect of memory.[[145]](#footnote-145) The mechanism then may be one of a failure of integration of mental material, or perhaps a differentiation or gradient of degrees of integration of different types of mental material. The troublesome content of ‘repressed’ mental content then would be the result of incompatibilities with other mental content in memory. This in turn would lead to the existence of a stubborn residue of unresolved, unintegrated and forgotten (or half-forgotten) mental conflict, as opposed to a more structural construction; and the notion of a metaphorical locked basement, perhaps.[[146]](#footnote-146) Nonetheless, for the purpose of exposition, we will for now retain the terms ‘repression’ and ‘repressed unconscious’.

Whatever the operative aspects of ‘repression’, whilst the mind engages with the world, it learns as it develops through its calculations and navigations, how it must organise itself. If all contents of mind are indeed intentional and oriented towards the world, including those arising from strategic imagination, this means the creations of the human mind will compete with one another for dominance. Just as one strategy will preclude another, so there will be irreconcilable possibilities for mental structure. Simultaneously, an ideal-self will separate out in a process comparable to Freud’s ‘ego-precipitation’ by which the ego-ideal appears, and by which identity becomes established. This ideal-self, the I*i* (‘*i’* for ‘ideal’),becomes the site of personal and group identity, and is also infused by ideology, so cementing the person’s relationships with others and positioning them in the larger social totality. The I*i* moreover, will vary in its relative social weight, cultural importance, and influence in the person’s life, depending upon the type of society and its culture, into which they have been born, and through which they have grown and developed.

A screenshot of a computer

Description automatically generated

ΔI*i* = The culturally relative ideal ‘I’

By a combination of conscious apprehension and realisation then, and the unconscious repression of risky, unfeasible and dangerous modalities of mind, one mode will become established as effective and optimal for survival; this being the most basic aspect of the ‘materialism’ of historical materialism. This is the external and obvious social determination that results from the modes of production and consumption, that together define a given type of society; and that also historicise the specific mode-of-mind.

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Although the true complexity of the structuring of the mode-of-mind will bring us to a limit where language fails us, still we can sketch some of the contours to its variability. We have already outlined the role that can be ascribed to the mode-of-consumption as a historicising factor for the mode-of-mind, considering its consequences for social relationships, gendering and family type. Concluding our reflection upon the role of the dialectic-of-self, we will consider finally two further axes that derive from it.

Firstly, there is the range of forms of internalisation and introjection of the objects of the world, their groupings into mental complexes, and the ‘foldings’ and organisation of these mental representations into systems of intra-psychical structure; and also, the symbolic meanings they bring with them from external culture.

Secondly, there is the axis of identification that defines a mode-of-mind. Here the focus is the creation of the I*i* from the I as it interacts with society, and its degree of importance in its social context; its relative social weight. So, within mainstream western consumer experience, capitalism works to position us as individuals detached from any collective society, with all of the alienations, vulnerabilities and neuroses that follow from such a construction. It does so imperfectly, and competes with other more collective identities that are rooted after all in the realities of class, culture and community. Nonetheless ‘the self’, experienced in its isolated consuming role, is a powerful psychological force in our lives. Contrast this with societies in which the I*i* that stands alone hardly occurs. Indeed, that the notion of ‘individuality’, experienced as something separate and non-collective, is alien in many types of society, has been well-documented in numerous anthropological studies.

**The reality of the mind**

An emphasis upon the variability of the mind as a relative historical factor in human societies, is not the same as a theoretical jettisoning of the self as something that is real. B. F. Skinner, in *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*,[[147]](#footnote-147) casts the notion of an interior self as a relic of medieval notions of vital forces and animal spirits. For theoretical purposes, the positing ‘inner man’ for Skinner achieves no more than a filling of explanatory gaps; an analytical dead-end. In the pursuit of an account of human behaviour that uses only externally observable traits, we are exhorted to shake-off the ‘autonomous man’ within, living on in the ‘literatures of freedom and dignity’.

*His abolition has long been overdue. Autonomous man is a device used to explain what we cannot explain in any other way. He has been constructed from our ignorance, and as our understanding increases, the very stuff of which he is composed vanishes. Science does not dehumanize man, it de-homunculizes him, and it must do so if it is to prevent the abolition of the human species. To man* qua *man we readily say good riddance.[[148]](#footnote-148)*

Another influential version of this rejection of an authentic human self is found in Daniel Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained*. Dennett subjects the very idea of ‘mind’ itself to a sustained critique that concludes in its replacement by an computational modelling of mental processes. Dennett rejects *tout court* the notion of a Cartesian Theatre; a centrally-focused self that controls the psychology of the person and orients them in the world. Instead cognition, and what we experience as ‘consciousness’, is the result of ‘multiple drafts’, internal narratives that rival one another to account for the world. Moreover, in this analytical framing there is no ‘Central Meaner’ that can adjudicate between these competing drafts. Those that emerge as dominant, do so as a result of continuous testing and re-testing against reality and our experience of it (bringing to mind Skinner’s Operant Conditioning), emerging as winners that achieve a metaphorical ‘fame’ as they organise our mental horizons. In the spirit of Ryle then, Dennett says that what we experience as ‘mind’ is no more than the end result of a process of Narrative Editing within which the mental representations that we believe to be our own creations, are in fact the end-product of a chain of events in the brain; one in which we as ‘selves’ have played no part. Dennett’s position is that of an ‘eliminative materialism’ that rejects the notion of consciousness itself, making it an effect of material events of which we are not, and cannot be conscious. ‘The mind’, for Dennett does not exist as a coherent theoretical construct, nor indeed an actually existent entity.

What these philosophical dismissals of ‘the self’ and ‘the mind’ – and, by implication, ‘the subject’ (for Marx), and ‘the ego’ (for Freud) – have in common is an underlying philosophical *mechanism* that defines their theoretical character at all levels. A mechanistic paradigm seeks to establish the brain as the cause of all mental processes. So, an idea, a mental representation, an emotional state, must each be explained by the electro-chemical events and neuronal pathways associated with them. The causal logic travels from brain to mind, or what we *experience* as mind. Moreover, within this way of seeing things, for a mental structure or psychological trait to be treated as amenable to objective study and worthy of scientific analysis, it must at least in principle be locatable as a structure or an event in the brain. If is not, then it does not exist, except perhaps as a psychical deception or an illusory artefact.[[149]](#footnote-149)

Now, whilst no Cartesian dualism of material substance and mental substance is being proposed here, there is a reversal to this logic that can be considered, and indeed is being proposed, as an alternative (and better) conceptualisation. This proposal has two aspects: the matter of causal direction already alluded to; and the matter of absolute and relative ontological status.

First, the matter of causal direction. We see here, and we have seen earlier, that in this mechanical model, brain is posited as the cause of mind. This is taken to be axiomatic and incontrovertible. However, it is not. We can say equally, that ‘mind is the cause of brain’. This may seem a casual abandonment of materialism, and a wild jump into idealism. Again however, it is not. Mind is of course something that *happens* in the brain, and that cannot exist without billions of neuronal ganglia, connections and pathways. Indeed, with each advance in the brain sciences we come to have an increasingly detailed understanding of the ways in which brain structure and function enables and animates the *general* capacity for mind. Roaming glial cell for instance, once thought to be of secondary significance, and as having an auxiliary function to the important work of the neurones themselves, are now understood to contribute to human intelligence.[[150]](#footnote-150) Brain activity is now also known to display non-linear, ‘fractal’ dynamics that may account for the possibilities of creative of thought, imagination and the swiftness of our mental responses to changes in our immediate environment. These dynamics may also be the basis of a consciousness that is distributed throughout the brain, rather than being located in a structural centre.[[151]](#footnote-151) And it may be that the interactive dynamics of consciousness and ‘the unconscious’ in the Freudian sense, is enabled by the neuronal networks that have been observed connecting the pre-frontal cortex to the amygdala-limbic system within the deep structure of the brain.[[152]](#footnote-152)

However, this steadily improving picture of how the brain works continues to leave open the question of the location of the causes that drive neuronal processes. The causes of the nervous pathways associated with social behaviours – their growth and their moment-to-moment activity – still need not reside in the brain itself. In this sense we have not progressed at all from the point that Freud reached when he abandoned the mechanistic scientific paradigm for symbolic theory.

In rejecting neuronal ‘mechanism’ as a paradigm, we begin our causal analysis and locate our explanations of consciousness in its *specific* aspects, exclusively in society, in the social interactions of the person, mediated by their memories, identities, tastes, biography, culture and so on, and those of the others with whom they share social discourse. If this, we call ‘mind’ (perhaps ‘outward mind’) - something that happensin the higher cortex of the brain under the stimulus of social interaction (its cause) - then we can hypothesise its role in moulding the deeper processes of the brain into structures that can become fixed as the historical mode-of-mind (perhaps ‘inward mind’) that that has been discussed. We have already conjectured that linguistic processes may play an important role in fixing the conceptual structures that arise from them into a stable mental architecture. These structures, however established, of course are then active in the moment-to-moment processing of the stream of information constantly entering the person’s experiential and perceptual fields. In this hypothesis, the social structure through which the person develops, the instruction they receive and the learning that results, provide the creative drive towards enduring cognitive and affective systems. From this vantage-point, it is ‘mind’ (understood as the neuronal aspect of social life) that causes ‘brain’ (in fact, the deep neuronal sub-structures supporting moment-to-moment mental activity) – in its historical context; and not the other way around.[[153]](#footnote-153)

Second, the matter of ontological status. In the Dennettian model, only the neuronal events that produce the mental processes we call ‘mind’ are substantively real. The ‘drafts’ that compete with one another for dominance have a type of agency all of their own that does not require any supervening consciousness in order to function. What we call our ‘mind’ then, is no more than an effect-after-the-fact to the underlying processes that are doing the thinking, responding to stimuli, and navigating in the objective world that we believe (falsely) our ‘selves’ to be doing. We are zombies; clever zombies, but zombies nonetheless. We do not steer ourselves in the world, we are steered; we do not think, we are thought. Such a robotised (and nihilistic) account of human consciousness results from the idea that for the mind to exist it must do so as a distinct structure that can be identified and located objectively – as an object - within the brain, and that can then be positioned as a prime cause for subordinate mental processes. Again, this is a mechanistic notion. And again, there is an alternative way of looking at things.

We have seen that there is a crucial distinction between the general capacity-*for*-mind and a particular mode-*of*-mind. The brain obviously provides the capacity for a mind to come into being. This is something that can be – must be – conceived structurally, and discovered by empirical, neurological study. A particular mode-of-mind however, belongs and is specific to the social and historical context that has produced it. In its adaptation to the environment in which it survives, the elements that comprise mind in this model – I, I*o*, I*i,* sd*e*, sd*i*, *etc.* – have variable weighting with respect to one another. So, the sense-of-self as something separate from society (Io) for example, Skinner’s ‘autonomous man’, is not the theoretical pretender to a structurally constant anthropological throne; a fraudulent homunculus to be exposed. Rather it is historically variable, and in some types of society may barely exist. It has a *relative* ontological status. Moreover, it need not be a ‘thing’ in a neurological-structural sense at all. And, considering the radical variability of the mind, it can be a *functional* centre that emerges through memory as a mode from the regularity of decisions, influences, worldly actions and reactions, desires, ambitions, and so on of a real person in their concrete social setting.

‘Mind’ then, understood in its singular sense, comes into being as an attribute of general mental activity through a dialectic-of-self. It need not be a structural centre, but instead an ordered patterning of higher cortical processes; these may even be structurally unique to the individual in-so-far as the radical variability of brain allows for many and various neuronal pathways to achieve the same systemic result. Whether many or few in number, these cortical processes produce a foveal minds-eye that views the world from a central vantage point as a part of a social group, or simply as an individual. This active precipitate of a life experience within a given culture is then the real ontogenic root of the person, understood as an authentic self with agency, rationality and moral perspective.

**The historically relative ‘I’**

Whilst the self can be a powerful structural factor in human behaviour within a highly marketised capitalist society, it is not a historical constant. Indeed, it is sometimes something that is substantially absent in the cultural traces left by early human societies. Marx and Engels in their later writings commented upon the ‘primitive communism’ that characterised pre-capitalist clan and tribal societies. Examples of such societies having existed could be found around the world. Engels particularly traced the cultural and sexual-pairing rituals of these communal, ‘gentile’ societies in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*[[154]](#footnote-154) of 1884. Highlighting the suppression of common ownership by the rise of capitalism and imperialist powers, Engels wrote:

**The mind, the self and repression.** A ‘model-of-mind’, assembled from the key conceptual elements of Marx’s historical theory is enhanced by the psychoanalytical concept of ‘repression’. The key elements then are the following: ‘mode-of-consumption’, framing the domain in which subjective ‘experience’ is constructed separately from formal economic identity, and so providing the basis for a *personal* self; a ‘dialectic-of-self’ found in Marx’s early texts, drawing upon key Hegelian concepts; a historically relative and variable concept of ‘self’ (or ‘I’) found in the Marx’s *Ethnological Notebooks*; and a notion of social determination differentiated between the ‘external’ and the ‘internal*ised*’. Such a general model must be both sufficiently transferable across the vista of human historical and cultural contexts to maintain its theoretical validity, and sufficiently pliable to explain any given cultural formation, particular mind-set or social behaviour. In other words, from a general *model*-of-mind, we must be able to derive a *mode*-of-mind that is historically specific.

*It prevailed among the Germans, Celts, Indians — in short, all of the Indo-European peoples in primeval times; it was only recently suppressed by force in Ireland and Scotland, and although it is dying out, still occurs here and there in Germany today.*[[155]](#footnote-155)

The absence of individual or even family possessions in such societies points to a mode-of-mind free of the elevated ego characteristic of the self under capitalism; and so quite different to our modern-day experience of ourselves.

Finally, however it is configured, a mode-of-mind, with varying degrees of separation of individual identity from the collectivism of the tribe or clan, *etc.* must be ‘fixed’ into an enduring operational structure, embedded at an early stage of individual development, in order to internalise, introject and idealise correctly the material and cultural objects of the group. The mode-of-mind, once established, will align the child, the adolescent and the young adult successfully towards their social position. It belongs to the type of society that it serves.[[156]](#footnote-156)

**A Marxist model-of-mind: the basic elements**

To summarise, we can hypothesise a Marxist model-of-mind using the following elements considered as axes along which different aspects of the variability of the human mind can be mapped.

1. A specific **mode-of-production** and aco-dependent **mode-of-consumption** determine the historical field within which mental structure develops.
2. Mental structure emerges as a **mode-of-mind** that belongs to a concrete historical and social setting.
3. That a specific mode-of-mind can be derived from a general model-of-mind is the result of the **radical variability** (and adaptability) of the human mind.
4. This radical variability makes possible a **dialectic-of-self** by which the individual develops their ability to labour upon the world, and simultaneously to become a part of their society.
5. One aspect of this dialectic-of-self is the limitless range of ways in which the material and cultural objects of the natural and social environment can be **internalised**, **introjected** and **organised conceptually** by the mind, in the process producing the ‘subject-for-itself’ (Io).
6. A further aspect of the dialectic-of-self is the result of the process of **identification** as the ‘ideal I’ (I*i*) emerges and splits from the subject (I); and the relative social weight and importance of an identification as a ‘separate (asocial) individual’ (ΔI*i*), in relation to that of the ‘collective (social) individual’.
7. As the person develops into their material and cultural world along these axes, they come to master **symbolic meaning** through the medium of language, as they move from object-related understanding and communication, to more abstract thinking and self-identity.
8. **Inner speech** that precedes fixed word-associations, symbolic structure and social communication provides a fluid substratum of meaning (a metaphorical **psycho-plasm**) beneath formal and codified speech, culture and behaviour, so enabling the mode-of-mind to happen.
9. The creation of a mode-of-mind with a social structure of internalisation-introjection and identity-formation, leaves a sediment of mental material caused by its **repression**, continuing to work as a force in the life of the society and also that of the person; it represents an area of **differentiated social determination** existing beneaththe more explicit influences of a society and its culture, and one that is opaque to the individual and their group.

The Marxist model-of-mind can create different structures of mental life – modes-of-mind – that fit particular types of society, and that are organised along lines of object-internalisation and identification. It is trans-historical in its general capacity to create the mode-of-mind; and historical in any of its actual modal manifestations.

The implications of a Marxist model-of-mind

This model-of-mind has implications for some theoretical questions that have been, and are today, topics of controversy within Marxism; and in the movements with which Marxists find themselves engaging. We will address some of these questions here, in the light of the model that has been described.

**Humans *and* nature**

Concerns with the interaction between humans and nature are evident in the earliest publications of Marx and Engels and continue through both of their lifeworks. In *The German Ideology* (1845) they contrasted their own understanding of this relationship to that of Ludwig Feuerbach who had positioned nature as an object against which the human being was counterposed; in other words, nature was that which is purely external to human activity. For Marx and Engels this was not the case. Rather nature was that which was worked upon and changed by human activity; by industry. Forests became sources of timber; rivers sources of power; grasslands became grazing pastures or arable land; *etc.* In other words, nature became transformed by human labour and industry. Only in the remotest zones could nature be considered to exist untouched by human activity. But more than this, in the process of working upon nature, human essence itself became transformed. In other words, as humans laboured upon nature, changing it in the process, they also changed themselves. So, whilst the entire history of human industry was envisaged as nothing but the ’humanisation of nature’, it was equally seen as the ‘naturalisation’ of human essence. The understanding of ‘human nature’ offered by Marx and Engels then was not the notion of fixed and unchanging being, but rather a thing of constant conditioning and alteration throughout history, contingent upon the types of industry prevalent in any given epoch. As Marx was to put it later against Proudhon:

“ … all history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature …"[[157]](#footnote-157)

And whilst external nature and the natural endowments of human beings always provided the conditions of human survival, setting the limits of human possibility, the essential human ‘mode-of-being’ that was specific to any concrete setting was the creation not of nature, human or otherwise, but rather of the form of labour by which human essence had become transformed into a specific type. Unlike Feuerbach, Marx and Engels did not see an absolute distinction between humanity and nature; humans had emerged *from* nature, changing both it and themselves simultaneously in-so-doing. At the level of their general anthropology an illustration of this is given Engels’ 1876 essay, ‘The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man’, part of the larger work *Dialectics of Nature* first published in 1925. As we have seen Engels hypothesised a developmental dialectic between the challenges and opportunities presented by nature for species survival, and the adaptive power created by the evolution of the human hand: a dialectic driven crucially by the emergent capacity of humans to work upon and so change their environment.

It is important to note a difference however in Marx’s and Engels’ thinking on the question of the relationship between humanity and nature. Engels’ theorisations often envisage a dialectic operating in nature that also enters human history, albeit in a non-reductionist manner. [[158]](#footnote-158) One example is that of higher, more complex and advanced forms of life, that emerge from lower forms; this also having its versions across the millennia of human history. This naturalising tendency in Engels’ comments upon the development of human society is less evident in Marx’s writings. Marx’s dominant emphasis instead is upon a dialectic *between* human society and nature, such that transformations of social being occur with changes in the character of labour. These changes are the result of revolutions in productive technique and industry, rather than emerging under the influence of evolutionary pressures or necessary historical stages.[[159]](#footnote-159)

Moreover, for Marx the relationship between humanity and nature was never one of immediate contact. Rather the interaction is one constantly mediated by labour, nature presenting an always practical horizon that both obstructs and constructs our perceptions of the world and of our own human essence. Whilst there could be no unmediated knowledge of nature, equally there could be no pure contemplation of the self. For both Marx and Engels this was an anthropological principle that characterised the entirety of human history for as long as human existence was dominated by the struggle for survival, and within the realities of class society.

Under capitalism, whilst labour was an alienation of the worker from their labour power and its product, human *essence* – the transformative potential of creative labour – was separated from human *being* in its concrete social manifestations, and in the life of the individual. This alienation also had its corollary in the relationship between humanity and nature. The emergence of capitalist property relations, and as a direct consequence the enclosure of land and the commodification of the fruits of nature, represented a fundamental break of human beings from their natural environment. The ‘metabolic’ interaction between humans and nature had been severed, resulting in an estrangement from their environment in social relationships now dominated by commodity fetishism, and the despoiling of nature through the exhaustion of soil by intensive farming for markets, and voracious extractive capitalist industry and its waste products.

*Capitalist production collects the population together in great centres, and causes the urban population to achieve an ever-growing preponderance … it disturbs the metabolic interaction between man and the earth, i.e. it prevents the return to the soil of its constituent elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; hence it hinders the operation of the eternal natural condition for the lasting fertility of the soil.*[[160]](#footnote-160)

For the capitalist the original state of nature was a matter of pure indifference, the object of nature valued only ever for its contribution to the creation of the commodity. With each round of increasingly intense capitalist competition the natural world became ever more separate from the social form of production (alienated labour), valued only as a source of power and raw materials for industry. Furthermore, the ruination of natural environments and the destruction of ecosystems could only worsen under capitalism, and with it the debasement of human relations now subject to the predations of capitalist exploitation of both the individual worker and of the nature’s gifts.[[161]](#footnote-161) Only in revolution and the establishment of the communist society would human essence be reunited with social being, and people with nature, as humankind achieved full actualisation of its potential as a creative species and a free historical subject.

But it is the status of the idea of a ‘human nature’ with respect to social behaviour that concerns us here; in other words, the question ‘Are relations between humans the result of a fixed anthropological character, given by an unchanging natural principle found in all human societies?’

**Human nature: a controversy**

In his 1983 publication *Marx and Human Nature. Refutation of a Legend*,[[162]](#footnote-162) Normal Geras took Marxists to task where they maintained that Marx had rejected the idea of a ‘human nature’, pointing for their evidence to the sixth of his *Theses on Feuerbach*.

Marx’s sixth thesis runs as follows:

*Feuerbach resolves the essence of religion into the essence of man. But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence is hence obliged:*

1. *To abstract from the historical process and to define the religious sentiment regarded by itself, and to presuppose an abstract — isolated - human individual.*

*2. The essence therefore can by him only be regarded as ‘species’, as an inner ‘dumb’ generality which unites many individuals only in a natural way.*[[163]](#footnote-163)

Geras subjects this thesis to careful exegesis and logical analysis to establish that it does not entail a rejection of the idea of human nature. He also points to other passages across Marx’s works that refer to natural and enduring human characteristics that are not historically specific. Whilst recognising the huge emphasis he places upon social relations in shaping human behaviour, Geras insists upon Marx’s acceptance of an unchanging, nature-given set of attributes that belong to human beings in any given time or place; that make us what we are. Finally, Geras finds a normative value in the idea of human nature: a measure against which capitalism can be judged and condemned; and a means by which socialism can be defended and justified as a goal worthy of effort.[[164]](#footnote-164)

Despite Geras’ defence of a Marxist notion of human nature, the term is at best unhelpful for our understanding of human experience, and at worst is obfuscating. Before expanding upon this position however, we will consider why this question is of more than merely academic interest, and why it is important to be clear in our view of it.

*Human nature: does it matter?*

The idea of a fixed human nature is of course commonly used to discredit and ridicule the idea of socialism as a possible state of human affairs and organisation. Humans are naturally selfish, it is said, each seeks personal advantage over others, and they are naturally acquisitive, so making nonsense of the idea of a free and equal society. This wearisome usage of the phrase need not detain us here; it is an argument dispatched daily by socialists in the normal course of their activisms and personal lives. In recent years however, a version of the idea has become central to debate and controversy amongst socialists with one another. This is the debate that has swirled on the left around questions of gender; and crucially, the matter of the self-identification of those who change their gender by declaration.

For matters of sex, sexuality and gender the notions of ‘nature’ in general, and ‘human nature’ more specifically, do not illuminate things at all. Before we look at why this is the case, we will lay out the terms of this debate and their meanings and respond more broadly to the question of the reality or otherwise of a purported ‘human nature’.

*Human nature: terms of the debate*

Firstly, we will define the key terms. With the term ‘human’ we are referring to the highly intelligent, tool-making hominid species of *Homo sapiens* that evolved into existence in Africa at some point between 90,000 and 160,000 years ago, to then migrate into Europe and the Middle East, and on into Asia, Australia and the Americas over the subsequent decamillennia. This is the species from which *Homo sapiens sapiens* was to emerge, the species we know to be ourselves. With the term ‘nature’ we mean all of reality that is not the result of human action and creativity. Such reality is independent of human endeavour and is the given element of the external environments that human beings have adapted to. This reality moves under physical, chemical, biological and mathematical laws that determine its manifestations; in other words, not as a result of human action. Note, we do not mean here the effects of human action on the environment that human beings master and alter, but rather to an underlying material substrate. Whilst human beings can and do alter nature by their activity, and can consciously manipulate nature, they cannot create it; so, whilst plastics can be created by scientific-industrial labour from a natural product (oil), the chemistry involved is something that is fixed and unchanging (despite the best efforts of the alchemists from the Greco-Roman era to the European Renaissance).[[165]](#footnote-165) And by ‘human nature’ we mean the idea that there are aspects of interpersonal behaviour that are fixed and unchanging, that we inherit from our evolutionary past and that are constitutive, in some sense at least, of what it is to be human, regardless of physical location or historical setting; aspects that are wholly or in part, genetically determined.

*Human nature: what might it mean?*

Having defined the key terms, we can now engage with the argument mounted by Geras, defending the notion of a human nature. Geras’ logical exposition of the ‘sixth thesis’ is clear. The thesis is indeed prey to the possible interpretations that he lays out, to the effect that whilst Marx heavily emphasises the role of social factors in determining the ‘essence of man’, this does not preclude a non-social essence *per se*. Indeed, quite the opposite. As he moved away from the dominant philosophical paradigms of his intellectual youth, he distinguished his own thinking on this very point. Many of the great names of European Enlightenment thinking such as Jean-Jaques Rousseau, Johann Herder and Georg Hegel had tended strongly towards historicising discourses that understood all-things-human in terms of connectedness; interconnections that is of the individual and their society, of identity and mythic pasts, and of the nation and its culture. In this Romantic Historicism, the brute reality of human need and means of survival was washed away as something to be seriously considered, as either a theoretical starting point or destination. It was against this ‘historicism’ that Marx would come to contrast his and Engel’s ‘historical *materialism*’.[[166]](#footnote-166)

Geras’ has many examples where Marx refers to a ‘nature of man’ or a ‘natural essence’ and so on, however briefly. Our starting point then will be those characteristics that come definitively under the rubric of ‘human nature’ presented not as a transformational potential, but rather as fixed and universal features of the species. Proceeding in this fashion we will consider an alternative interpretation by evaluating these against the following conceptualisations: ‘form’; ‘metabolism’; ‘needs’; ‘instinct’; ‘behaviour’; and ‘capacities’.

* *Human form and metabolism*

We will begin with ‘form’. Shall we agree that the human form is that of the bipedal, upright standing, bilaterally symmetrical type? Variations occur because of injury or accidents of birth. The normalising of the human form does have an ideological aspect. And conditions such as amelia (the absence of limbs) and polymelia (having extra limbs) do arise from a range of chromosomal, hormonal, and environmental causes. However, we are talking now of the human form as it has developed over evolutionary spans of time, covering the transition from its pre-historical origins to the modern day, and understood in terms of its most general and recognised characteristics.

Next, a comment on ‘metabolism’. Shall we also agree that the human being is an omnivorous creature, adapted to consuming many types of vegetation and meat; this having been important for the adaptability of the earliest hominid nomads to a wide range of environments, and their ability to migrate across the continents? Certain vitamins are essential to the human diet; and there are specific requirements also for minerals that are important for metabolic and immunological processes. Again, there are variations: the defectiveness of the gene needed to produce aldehyde dehydrogenase in some Asian populations; metabolic disorders linked to ethnicity; *etc*. Even including such variations, there remains an obvious global conformity of human metabolism.

With respect to both form and metabolism (and discounting speculations regarding the potential of developments in hybridising technologies, artificial intelligence and cyborgism that move us into the realms of science-fiction), we are dealing of course with attributes that have not changed for many thousands of years. These are indeed constant features of the species *H. s. sapiens*. Some are essentially attributes of our mammalian, animal nature. Others, whilst biologically given, have been of evolutionary significance for our pre-human and human development; this is true particularly of some aspects of diet with respect to brain development, and of bipedalism for the freeing of the forelimbs and the evolution of the hand. This latter factor, naturally, was an essential co-requisite for the emergence of tool-use and takes the hominid evolutionary timeline back at least 2.5 million years. At around the same archaeological period, there is the first evidence of language capacity in the material record, in the form of the Brocca and Wernicke speech areas that appear in skull endocasts of *Homo habilis*.[[167]](#footnote-167) These aspects of the corporeal form and brain structure of the Homo genus, and others, created the biological template for the emergence of modern humans.[[168]](#footnote-168) These, and other characteristics like them, are consequential features of form and structure that both create our human potential and set its limitations.

This range is true also at the chemical scale: whilst the possession of DNA polymerase is a characteristic of all cellular life, and that of cytochrome oxidase necessary to all aerobic organisms, the possession of the genes that code for the endorphins, vasopressins and other hormones associated with mood and affective states are important only for social animals. From these observations we can distinguish our biological inheritance as a species into characteristics of the ‘animal’ type necessary for life, and those of the ‘consequential’ type - consequential that is, for the emergence of human intelligence and social structure.

* *Human needs*

Turning our attention to ‘needs’, we also find a range of types. Here we should separate out obvious basic needs from higher social needs shared by all humans - as does Geras. Of course, we need a stable supply of food that provides us with the right combinations of food types, vitamins and minerals. The child of a woman who was undernourished during pregnancy may be born with defective brain development that will affect its intelligence. We need shelter, warmth and protection from the elements and the vagaries of climate. To function we need to be free from infection and disease. With respect to sex, although a highly enculturated area, there are physical urges to be met at the individual level; and a need to successfully reproduce at the level of the group. All these basic needs, and their fulfilment or otherwise, occur in a social context; all are socially mediated. However, as Geras is at pains to stress, they remain for the most part, brute physical requirements for human survival. Regarding higher social needs there is the need for human conviviality, playfulness, inventiveness, varieties of consumption and of work, intellectual stimulation, and so on.

Marx explores this distinction between basic and higher needs in his account of the emergence of consciousness and of ‘history’ in the *German Ideology* of 1845. In a celebrated passage that has as its target the speculative philosophies still fashionable at the German universities, Marx outlines four ‘moments’ that must occur before human consciousness, and therefore human history, become possible. The first is the meeting of the most basic needs for human survival. The second concerns the emergence of ‘new’, higher needs as the first are met. The third is the need to reproduce the next generation. This last need differentiates into sexual reproduction in its dual aspect: as a natural relationship; and as a social relationship. Only once these four moments are complete can consciousness emerge, first at the most basic level as group-, or ‘herd’-consciousness, and then, as productive technique advances and divisions of manual and mental labour emerge, as ideologies, philosophies, theoretical systems, ethics and so on; this representing the emergence of historical consciousness.[[169]](#footnote-169)

A notable feature of this summarised account, and its relevance for this inquiry, is the combination of unchanging, natural themes, and the emergence of consciousness; introducing changeable, social themes to Marx’s account of the origins of human history. The most important aspect to note however, is Marx’s separation of the two. Marx is clear: ‘history’ begins only when humans begin to separate themselves from their origins in nature.

* *Instinct and behaviour*

In the day-to-day tropes of cultural life within capitalism, we hear often that behaviour is ‘natural’, a part of our fundamental make-up. We are told - in crude and explicit ways by tabloid newspapers and public-house common-sense, and in the more round-about, implicit messaging of ministerial speech-makers, educational curricula and popular science - that human beings are inclined towards selfishness, competition and personal opportunism. Moreover, individuals can feel this within themselves, taking it to be something that is natural. The logic of these ubiquitous sentiments and view-points is often based upon observations of, and also assumptions about, animal behaviour. We behave instinctively, we are led to believe, because this is a part of our animal make-up. Sexual behaviour particularly we’re told, is the result of our evolutionary past, and something we share in the way of instincts with higher animals. The ethologist, Konrad Lorenz[[170]](#footnote-170), argued for instance, that aggression had emerged as a positive group-binding attribute of social animals, transferring by the phylogenetic evolution of instincts into human behaviour. Influenced by Freud’s libido-cathexis model, Lorenz argued that aggressivity accumulates up to the point where it is discharged, either literally in intra-species aggression, or in ritualised behaviour.[[171]](#footnote-171) For Lorenz, observable and consistent ‘behaviour patters’ found in animals have been carried by evolutionary trends into the human species. An alternative mechanism is suggested by the ‘Baldwin Effect’ discussed by Dennett (1991), by which advantageous phenotypic social behaviours become selected for in a neo-Lamarkian fashion, to become ‘hard-wired’ into the genotype of the animal as a heritable instinctual trait.

In response to these hypotheses, we will reflect upon the meaning of the term ‘instinct’ itself. By ‘instinct’, we refer to set behavioural modes that have a predictable character, that are innate to a species and that to some degree define it. Such set behaviours will often be in response to particular kinds of stimulus, such as threats, opportunities to feed or seasonal cycles. The behaviours of the males and females of a given species will revolve around breeding cycles and the protection of the young. Hierarchical behaviours will be evident in the group dynamics of species with social structures. These are the kinds of patterns that the protagonists of the ‘human nature’ position point to, as telling us something about ourselves. It is also the stuff of the Disneyesque anthropomorphisms of popular entertainment; and even the basis for the fondness that we have for our pets. However, the use of animal, instinct-based behaviour as any kind of template to understand human behaviour is illogical in more ways than one.

Firstly, the term ‘instinct’ is not just species-specific; concomitantly it is environment-specific. This means that the instinctive behaviour of an animal is what suits it to its environment. In a stable ecosystem of predator-prey relationships, biotic and abiotic substrata, and seasonal cycles there is a regularity in the life of the animal to which its instincts have adapted it. Of course, there is also animal learning, which in the natural habitat may enable the adult animal to distinguish between the edible and the non-edible, the poisonous and the non-poisonous, places of exposure to danger and places of safety, and so on. In artificial environments, animal intelligence does not rise above the level of rudimentary tool-use and puzzle-solving in multi-stage tests. The individuals of animal types that have a social structure in the wild, may indeed transfer their bonding instinct to their human keepers. Domestic pets (some) will devote themselves to loving owners, echoing a distant evolutionary past of hierarchical group dynamics. By contrast, the ability of human beings to not only adapt to almost every type of environment on Earth, but also to radically alter it by their labour, means that comparisons of human behaviour to the fixed-pattern instinctual behaviour of animals are nonsensical.

Secondly, similarities in the outward behaviours of human beings with those of animals do not logically evidence that they are the same phenomena. Indeed, a basic evolutionary principle in nature illustrates the point. Convergent evolution of phenotypic characteristics can belie quite different evolutionary routes to the same adaptive solution in different species. And truer still when we consider human behaviour compared to that of higher mammals. If the courtship rituals of human beings can sometimes appear similar to those of chimpanzees (do they ever?), this is not evidence of a common stock of genetically driven behavioural modes. In some human cultures, animal behaviours may be replicated, or mimicked, in rituals. Human beings may ‘make-sense’ of their own behaviour by metaphorical reference to animals they have a close relationship with. Ideological tropes may carry into modern life as historical ‘hangovers’ from earlier societies based upon farming. Individuals can act into ideological roles that take animal behaviour as their rationalisations. Human behaviour can be degraded into types that we describe as animalistic, or bestial, because of various kinds of immiseration and brutalising circumstance. In each case, whilst the outward form of the behaviour may suggest sameness, logically the underlying motivations and drives can be utterly different for humans and for animals.

This can be true also of human affective traits across the span of human history and pre-history. So, the avarice for which “ships are rigg’d, Seas travers’d, and fierce battles waged”[[172]](#footnote-172) has a meaning that belongs to the 8th Century Homeric period of which it is a part. It is the avarice of tribal aristocracies of the ancient world, based upon the literal conquest of lands and the subjugation of entire peoples to slavery. This is different to the avarice of the modern financier speculating wildly on the money-markets of modern capitalism. In both cases the individual may seek to enrich themselves without limit. However, the modes of production and consumption are different, and the economic, social and cultural dynamics are particular to each. The avarice in question then, is actually the effect of these dynamics, not their cause. What is continuous is the word itself; its historical meaning different in each case.[[173]](#footnote-173)

* *Human capacities*

Finally, we will consider human capacities. This is something that Geras places emphasis upon. Central to Geras’ argument for a human nature (and Marx’s purported acceptance of it) is an insistence that the need for variety of activity and for the free play of creative faculties, are trans-historical continuities, that can be found in all human cultures.

*Extant amongst his preoccupations, finally, is ‘the worker’s own need for development’: therefore the time available for ‘the free play of the vital forces of his body and his mind’: and a variety of pursuit – for ‘a man’s vital forces … find recreation and delight,’ Marx says ‘in change of activity’.*[[174]](#footnote-174)

Where these kinds of higher need are denied and repressed, as they so often are for most in class society, there also are human beings found in their most unhappy states. Geras cites Marx with many quotations that express horror, anger and rage at capitalism and the distorting effect it has upon human life and development.

Returning to the question of a model-of-mind we are progressing towards an understanding premised principally upon Marxist theory, though with the incorporation of the theoretical element of ‘repression’ as an explicit factor. Going much further than Geras on the question of indeterminacy in human life, we are envisaging this model-of-mind as radically variable in how it configures itself into specific modes-of-mind belonging to particular human societies. At the root of all of this, is the claim that the human mind is capable of fantastic adaptability; that in its general range of possible expressions it is far from fixed. Only with the emergence of specific modes-of-mind does the human mind become fixed in its underlying structure.

Further to the point, this characteristic of the human mind represents a continuation in the 90,000- to 160,000-year span of human existence. Here Geras is right: this aspect of humanity is indeed an enduring constant, found in every type of society. This does not however, mean agreement that the idea of a ‘human nature’ finds any sensible application in understanding specific human behaviours at the levels of the individual or of the group.

The constant is one of ‘capacity’ only or, on this theorisation, ‘model-of-mind’. It cannot be ‘mode-of-mind’ since this is historically specific. Yet it is only mode-of-mind that is ever manifest; that can have a content of mental representations and underlying configuration. The model-of-mind by definition cannot have a content of its own because it never exists in isolation; it is an inferred object. Revisiting the earlier account of the human mind, we should say that it is the limit point to the concrete analysis of any particular type of mind, in relation to its particular type of society. Looked at from a different angle it is the origin of the mental representations and mental structure belonging to any given society; the mode-of-mind that rises from it. The model-of-mind, that is indeed a human constant is also however an abstraction.

Putting to one side the term ‘human’, which here is given a conventional definition, we will look more closely at the term ‘nature’. We have seen that in Geras’ argument it is used with a gamut of referents connected with: biochemistry; biophysics; basic (animal) needs; behaviour; instinct; higher (human) needs; and human capacities. Of course, some of these do indeed represent natural (and indisputable) aspects of human life. However, as we ascend from the physical substratum of life, through to its basic animal functions, we arrive at aspects of human life that cannot be so straightforwardly categorised. So, human behaviour may show outward similarities with that of animals in some regards, without there being any real substantive commonality. The term ‘instinct’ with its meaning rooted in the specific stimulus-response reflexes of animals in their habitats, cannot be properly applied to human beings who by definition alter their environment by consciously working upon it. The fact that ‘human nature’ is used to cover this range of meanings, gives it the character of an overdetermined phrase; and one moreover that is saturated with ideology.

However, it is when we come to human capacities that Geras’ argument for the notion of human nature really fails. The trans-historical continuity that for Geras’ is human capacity, comes clearly under the model-of-mind we have been considering. As we have seen, this is a necessarily abstract and inferred construct that enables the configurations of mind characteristic of particular societies. This gives it a strange and unique ontological status. So, it is the (abstract) continuity (model-of-mind) that makes possible the (concrete) discontinuity (mode-of-mind). It is human capacities then, that make possible the vast range of social and cultural variety that constitutes humanity, and that have allowed human beings to proliferate so spectacularly. To include this characteristic of the human species under the rubric of ‘nature’ with its connotations of fixity (or at least resistance to human action), is to stretch the meaning of the term to a vanishing point. Human capacity does indeed represent a constant; however, it is one provides the potential for human beings to *transcend* the limitations of nature; it is what makes us human. It is a feature of the general human condition for sure, but it is not an example of ‘human nature’, because *that* is an illogical and meaningless coupling, empty of content.

*The ‘biological’ and the ‘social’*

Our alternative framework means we can put aside the concept of ‘human nature’ as a term that is logically incoherent, empirically obfuscating and irretrievably ideological. However, there is a related topic that requires our attention, before we move on to further consequences of our Marxist model-of-mind. This is the question of genetics and human behaviour. Here we arrive at the most ideological and political aspect of this discussion; and indeed, the pivotal claim upon which it is centred: ‘There are no specific social behaviours to which we are biologically pre-disposed.’

Maintaining this position demands two preliminary things: an account of the ideological aspects of ‘biology’ itself as a scientific discipline; and an acknowledgment of the ways in which biology is used ideologically to rationalise and justify existing social norms.

In their *The Dialectical Biologist*[[175]](#footnote-175) (1985), Lewontin and Lewin critique what they call the ‘alienated world’ of biology (and science, generally) that prevails under capitalism. The conceptualisations that characterise biology in this paradigm are based upon: the framing of the biological ‘object-of-study’ as static, self-enclosed and homogeneous; the analytical separation of organism and environment; and a unidirectional idea of causality ascending from gene to organism. In a dialectical view of biology, organisms and the components of life that support them, are seen developmentally, and as always changing in time. They are heterogenous and defined as much by the dynamic tensions within them, as they are by the physical boundaries that demarcate them from their surroundings. Also, the distinction between organism and environment is not absolute; rather they are inter-penetrating and mutually co-dependent. Finally, in the dialectical conceptualisation of life, many levels of reality are in constant and multi-directional causal relationship with one another. Lewontin and Lewin summarise this dialectical understanding in five aspects which are: historicity; universal interconnection; heterogeneity; interpenetration of opposites; and integrative levels.[[176]](#footnote-176)

At the most fundamental level, this dialectical view of life means that it is the organism that defines its ‘environment’, and not *vice versa*. As Lewontin (2000) explains:

*Just as there can be no organism without an environment, so there can be no environment without an organism. There is a confusion between the correct assertion that there is a physical world outside of an organism that would continue to exist in the absence of the species, and the incorrect claim that environments exist without species. The earth will precess on its axis, and produce periodic glacial and interglacial ages, volcanoes will erupt, evaporation from oceans will result in rain and snow, independent of any living beings. But glacial streams, volcanic ash deposits, and pools of water are not environments. They are physical conditions from which environments may be built. An* environment *is something that surrounds or encircles, but for there to be a surrounding there must be something at the centre to be surrounded. The* environment *of an organism is the penumbra of external conditions that are relevant to it because it has effective interactions with those aspects of the outer world.*[[177]](#footnote-177)

Moreover, all species by their active existence alter their habitats. The relationship then is normally one of interpenetration, rather than the interaction of otherwise internally unrelated entities; in other words, it is one of mutual and interdependent change. So, the organism and its environment are each constantly each influencing and changing the other. The activity of an organism will over time influence biotic factors such as ecological balances, predator-prey relationships, food-chains, *etc.* and also abiotic factors such as soil pH, water turbidity, rock surfaces, *etc.* Lewontin describes this view of the relationship between an organism and its environment as *constructionist*; as opposed to its conventional characterisation as *adaptionist* in popular evolutionary theory.[[178]](#footnote-178)

The ‘alienated’ ideological framing of biology is intrinsic to its ideological *use*. In *Not in Our Genes* (1984),[[179]](#footnote-179) and moving now to the human significance of biology, Rose, Lewontin and Kamin critique the popular idea that genetics provides an adequate basis for explanations of society. Traversing the topics of social inequality, intelligence, patriarchy and mental illness, and targeting the field particularly of ‘sociobiology’, they reject all theoretical attempts to reduce social structure to biological factors, and effectively so.[[180]](#footnote-180)

One component of their argument is that there are ‘levels of explanation’, each with their own appropriate and proportionate objective ontologies, scientific methodologies and theoretical focuses. At each level, biological factors belong to, and become manifest through, a proximal environment that mediates their consequences in the material world. So, the gene does not determine anything alone. Rather it operates, often in combination with other genes, within an enzymic environment upon with it relies for its ‘expression’. So too the cell, in higher, multi-cellular organisms works within an environment of biochemical nutrients, thermal regulation, and hormonal regulators. This logic can of course continue through many such levels: organs; organ systems; the body in its biotic and abiotic environment; the individual animal in its social group; the human being in their gens, their familial group, their tribe, *etc*; the social group in its larger society; and so on. No single level can be causally reduced to the level ‘beneath’ it in some simple manner. Rather each has its own laws of motion and material interaction. Moreover, although these levels may be separated analytically for the purpose of scientific scrutiny, in their moment-to-moment reality they all work at once, in a total process that is vastly complex. The notion then that ‘a gene’ or even the human genetic substrate, can ‘determine’ events at the level of the individual, let alone society, acting through all of these differentiated domains, stretches credulity beyond breaking point. It is not a scientifically feasible proposition.

More concretely, the relationship between an organism and its environment is not equally weighted. The environment of an organism is resistant to the change that is worked upon it by the organism; it will change slowly, over often enormous spans of time. As the species indeed evolves, its environment will eventually become *altered* by its activity and that of others - in combination with the great forces of geological and climatic change - as its inertial properties give way to the long-term effects of the prevailing flora and fauna.[[181]](#footnote-181) The dependencies involved are asymmetrical: living organisms *depend* upon their environment whilst also changing it. Abrupt changes to the environment such as ice-ages and hot-ages also make this abundantly clear in the reverse sense, with the disappearance of entire ecosystems from the fossil record.

In the case of human beings this environmental resistance has led to both innovation and migration. So, whilst non-human organisms survive with behavioural instincts that tie them closely to their habitats, humans alter their habitual and even unconscious behaviour to conquer new environments through intelligent adaptation.[[182]](#footnote-182) Whereas, for higher animals, instinctual behaviour then is optimally adaptive for *specific* habitats, human evolution has been characterised by the ability to adapt to a huge variation of environmental circumstances; something made possible by the replacing of instinct by intelligence and social organisation.

A second component to this critique of genetic reductionism is that of causal direction. In reductionist accounts of biological causation, the direction of causality is from the genetic level ‘up’ to the animal behaviour in question; the behaviour being its *result*. With respect to human behaviour also, what such theoretical models do not recognise, and something that Rose *et al.* are at pains to emphasise, is that causality also travels in the opposite direction. This follows from the ‘levels of explanation’ in the ideological framing of ‘biology’ at the more general level. So, whilst the expression of a human gene may alter its immediate environment by protein synthesis, nutritional status for example will alter the chemical environment of the gene itself, potentially influencing its expression in absolute or relative terms. Causality can and does work from the level of the individual or social group as they interact with the external environment, ‘down’ to organs, cells and chromosomes.

The position being defended by Rose *et al.* however, is not that of ‘interactionism’; rather it is that of mutual transformation of organism and environment. This is especially the case with respect to explanations of human behaviour. So, the argument they put, is not that any given behaviour, for example sexual behaviour, is influenced partly by biological factors and partly by societal factors, interacting to produce outwardly observable traits. Rather it is that they are co-determining of one another, in processes of which they are each aspects of a unified reality; human behaviour being simultaneously biological *and* social. This ‘dialectical determinism’ is the principal conclusion at which their analysis and overarching argument arrives. Moreover, it is a conclusion that rejects any type of reductionism, cultural as well as biological. Their concluding chapter includes the following observation that is directly pertinent to the task we have set ourselves of developing a Marxist model-of-mind:

*What is true of the organism in general is all the more accentuated in human psychic development. At every instant the developing mind, which is a consequence of the sequence of past experiences and of internal biological conditions, in engaged in a recreation of the world with which it interacts. There is a mental world, the world of perceptions, to which the mind reacts, which at the same time is a world created by the mind.* […]

*Further, our behaviour in response to that self-created mental world recreates the objective world that surrounds us. If we perceive others to be constantly hostile to us and behave toward them as if they were hostile, they indeed become so, and the perception becomes reality. As a child develops, its psychic environment comes into being partly as a consequence of its own behaviour.*[[183]](#footnote-183)

The account of the position of biology as an explanatory factor for human behaviour provided by Rose *et al.* complements the Marxist model-of-mind outlined earlier, and particularly in relation to the capacity-for-mind that must be the starting point for any materialist analysis. For Rose *et al*., biological factors are always mediated by social and cultural factors, all aspects of human behaviour being at once biological and socio-cultural. However, our model-of-mind goes one step further than a ‘mediation-based’ analysis in that ‘the biological’ is pushed into the most general, and abstract category of ‘capacity’ with respect to behaviour; and it is social behaviour in its specificity within a given type of society, with which we are primarily concerned.

Human society, industry and culture naturally have their corporeal substrate. Form and physiology set the parameters to human evolution and historical development. As Lewontin (1991) entertainingly points out, the six-inch tall Lilliputians of *Gulliver’s Travels* could not have smelted iron, mined minerals with miniature pick-axes, sustained fire with tiny twigs or mined to extract ores. Indeed, their tiny brains, he goes on, would not have been capable of even conceiving of such things.[[184]](#footnote-184) Whatever disservice Lewontin may be doing here to the intellects of the fictional inhabitants of Lilliput, his serious point is of course correct. Our technological achievements may overcome our biological limitations; but they do not eliminate them.

The argument here however, is that our biology is not the element that provides human activity with its social meaning. In other words, whilst our biology provides the most general potential for mental existence, it does not create any particular mental content, all of which is attributable to social, cultural and institutional structures and processes. Whilst all mental processes are ultimately the matter-in-motion that is the neuronal activity of the brain, as well as the physiological processes operating at higher levels of brain organisation, the question is not whether biology is involved in human behaviour at the most general level, but rather whether it can be said to drive particular behaviours. Leaving this question open creates a theoretical slipperiness that doesn’t resolve the position of ‘the biological’ in accounts of particular instances of human behaviour, allowing it to float free in the debate.

The task of dealing with the human ‘biological’ factor then is not quite finished. To explore this point, we will go to Lewontin and Levins (2007), where they identify a space within a false polarisation of biological reductionism on the one hand, and social constructionism on the other.

*For determinism, all social phenomena are merely the collective manifestation of individual fixed propensities and limitations coded in human genes as a consequence of adaptive evolution. At the opposite pole, subjectivity claims that all human realities are created by socially determined consciousness, unconstrained by any prior, biological or physical nature, all points of view being equally valid.*[[185]](#footnote-185)

They fill this space with their ‘mediation-based’ answer to the ‘society-biology’ question. As we have seen this conceptualises the relationship between biology and society as one of mutual influence. In matters of physical- and mental-health outcomes, and longevity at the individual and group levels, as well as social structure, this is indeed a cogent ‘third term’ that addresses the gap that these biologists identify. For human behaviour however, for example sexual behaviour, this leaves biology in the picture, albeit mediated by society and culture.

*Whereas human sociality is itself a consequence of our received biology, human biology is a socialized biology.*[[186]](#footnote-186)

This extension of a ‘socialised biology’ into all areas of human behaviour reveals the residual lacuna that has not been adequately filled by a mediatory theoretical framework. A view of social construction that differentiates between overt and obvious social influences, and the unconscious and concealed forms of social determination that result from repression, completes this task.

Biology sets limits for, and is intrinsic to, social being at the level of general capacity. However, the notion that any *specific* behaviour is influenced by biology is rooted in the explanatory gap between the individual and society. The repressed unconscious underpinning our model-of-mind, and the social-materialism that this supports, removes this gap, suggesting a differentiated notion of social determination and a behavioural substrate that we experience spontaneously, making such appeals to biology, albeit complex biology – or even the scientifically agnostic position of ‘we don’t know’ – unnecessary. So, whilst biology is ‘always there’, it is not where the explanations of our inter-personal behaviours lie, nor is it the source of their social and personal meaning.

*Mind and health*

For Rose *et al.* all aspects of human behaviour are at once biological and social. This conceptualisation is the result of their dialectical determinism, that sees the roots of human behaviour as located within the ‘interpenetration’ of biological and the socio-cultural factors. This is the basis of their critique of the reduction of causal explanations of human behaviour to the genetic level. Rose *at al*. have a great deal to say particularly about the reductionist therapeutic logic that has permeated psychiatric medical practice throughout its history. However, they have no theory-of-mind *per se* upon which to hang a more thorough rejection of the purported explanatory power of biological factors. The differentiated social determinism of our model-of-mind however, introduces a ‘relative indeterminism’ into how we understand human behaviour. For whatever mode-of-mind emerges in each historical and social setting, we see the mind itself as real. In other words, whilst its origin is social, the result of familial and developmental factors that are introjected from the external world, it becomes nonetheless an ‘internal site’ of self-awareness, cognition, interpretation, understanding, struggle and decision. It is authentic as a self-determining entity, albeit (apologies to Marx) never in circumstances of its own choosing.

Asserting the reality of mind here, is merely restating the rejection of the eliminative materialism that was earlier touched upon. However, positing a mental structure characterised by a differentiated social determinism, may provide us with something more to say about the mind as a social entity, and of problems of the mind as rooted in social contradiction and conflict.

In the earliest phase of modern studies of psychosis, Emile Kraepelin (1856-1926) had pioneered an approach to the study of mental disorders premised upon neuro-physical abnormalities of the brain, that were biological both in operation and in origin. The notion of the human mind as a quantifiable entity, amenable to measurement and determined ultimately by innate, biological structure is the bedrock of modern psychology. Today, this scientific paradigm supports vast industries of psychiatric intervention and pharmacological treatment.[[187]](#footnote-187) Moreover, the technological intensification of social and personal life, and our experience of ourselves as we align with these trends, are associated with much contemporary unhappiness.

*Our alienation from ourselves and work is compounded by the forward march of technology. As Marx noted, industrial production is organised to suit the work of machines and within such a system the human worker becomes ancillary to the machine: a cog in the clockwork manufacture of commodities for use and want, but not for need. From this it is a logical development that we ourselves come increasingly to resemble machines.*[[188]](#footnote-188)

From the earliest scientific speculations of the modern era, the idea of the mind as trans-historical in nature - directly opposed to that of the historical relativity of the ‘mode-of-mind’ hypothesis - has served as an ideological obstacle to a social understanding of mental illness.

*The socially, culturally, politically, economically and historically de-contextualised human being who emerges from the centre of reductionist psychological theorising has serious consequences for how we think about the social and psychological ills which befall us.*[[189]](#footnote-189)

The Kraepelinian paradigm today is supported by three main areas of research. Firstly, there are studies premised upon the assumption that psychosis is the result of structural abnormalities of brain structure, such as enlarged frontal ventricles. Secondly, those that assume that it arises from imbalances of brain neurochemistry; specifically related to the dopamine-system of the mid-brain. Thirdly, those that point to cognitive disorders and social-perceptual mal-functions. In all cases the working assumption is that maladies of the mind are the result of defects of the brain.[[190]](#footnote-190)

In his critique of the ‘Kraepelin model’ of the human mind, Richard Bentall (2004[[191]](#footnote-191); 2010[[192]](#footnote-192)) defends instead the idea of the ‘social brain’. He points out that in all of the key areas of brain research, there is little, if any, reflection that the structural, neuro-chemical and cognitive effects that are associated with psychosis, may be correlative symptoms that actually arise from other, social, causes. Social stressors as well as trauma and re-trauma (arising from the triggering in the memory of previous painful episodes), may themselves be causative in the observable features of brain and brain function.

**The ‘intentional mind’.** All specific mental content is treated here as ‘intentional’. In other words, there is an assumption that all ideas orientate towards the outside world; either directly in the normal sense of intended and obvious action, or indirectly in the sense of the mind’s working upon objects that have become internalised as ‘ideal-objects’ - including the social objects that are the introjected and mentalised versions of others from our lives, creating a social ‘theatre-of-the-mind’. This general proposition becomes especially important for accounts of mental illness, where the mind is split between conflicting and irreconcilable orientations towards the world, each triggering competing motor signals, and each of which demand fulfilment to the detriment or destruction of the other; either in reality or within an imaginary, though still tortured, arena. It becomes all the more distressing, and even terrifying, to the person when such competing intentional strivings – drawn from the paradoxes and contradictions of the social structures that have moulded them - are buried deep within the hidden recesses of a repressed unconscious.

Bentall’s emphasis upon trauma as an alternative hypothesis to that of ‘brain disease’ to explain mental illness, returns us once more to the mind understood as something that is social in origin. This accords also with a Marxist take on the questions at hand. The analytical concept of ‘alienation’ in particular, bridges the divide between the external world and its structuring, and the felt experience of the person in their interior, daily life under capitalism. As we have seen, for Marx, alienation originated in the obscured economic relations of capitalist exploitation. Moreover, these economic relations were riven with structural contradiction, and social and psychological tension. On a Marxist understanding, this reality defines the experience of the normal, well-adjusted and even outwardly ‘happy’ person. When crises of one kind or another, personal tragedy, and chronic anxiety and depression are added to the mix of factors that causally affect the individual’s state of mind, it is not difficult to understand why the mind goes awry for so many in capitalist society.

To complete this social hypothesis of mental illness, it is still necessary to take a further step. Whilst external social causes of mental illness can be traced and studied in abundance, their effects are not all of the same order, generality or type. More to the point, whilst some may be all-too-obvious to the person, others will be hidden from conscious apprehension, buried in the recesses of their psyche. The tensions that become locked into this structural realm - originating from without, introjected into the shadowy realms of the mind, and repressed from everyday self-awareness - become sinks for psychological energy, disrupting psychic equilibrium and even erupting into shattering collapses of normal mental function.[[193]](#footnote-193) Here, social determinations operate at many levels of human experience, from the proximal cultural cues and pressures of life in their immediacy, to the more profound influences that have remained as traces of early life, but of which the person is only dimly aware; or entirely unaware. These influences lurk in the realm of the repressed unconscious. They are the second type of social determination of our Marxist model-of-mind.

*Mind and gender*

This ‘second type’ of social determination is central also to explanations of gender. Its importance lies once more in providing an alternative hypothesis to that of the role of biology in the creation of ‘natural states’ within human experience.

From his earliest theoretical writings Marx leaned towards, and increasingly emphasised, a perspective on humanity that was non-essentialist, and non-biologistic. Consider for instance, the ‘culture/nature’ dualism that Marx critiqued in the dominant philosophies and literary tropes of his time. For Marx this was a dialectical pairing, whose dual moments were interpenetrating and co-conditioning; as opposed to being a mechanical, binary opposition, hierarchically arranged. Although Marx has been criticised for holding to a hierarchical view of the relationship between culture and nature,[[194]](#footnote-194) in which humanity, given the correct social and technological conditions, will transcend (and even *conquer*) nature, in fact this misunderstands his take on this question. Rather, Marx saw nature as a part of humanity, and as we have seen, labour as being ‘transforming’ both of nature and simultaneously also of humanity.

*Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art – his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible – so also in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc.*[[195]](#footnote-195)

However, this co-dependent relationship with nature, did not refer only to the external nature that provided the material means of subsistence and survival, but also to the ‘nature’ of humanity’s relation to itself; conforming to the general capacity-for-mind. So, since humanity always has a notion of its own nature – historically contingent, and relative to the prevailing modes of production and consumption – the individual’s relationship with others is conditioned by this notion. Herein, for Marx lies a measure of the degree of emancipation of humanity both within any given historical mode, and in general; and conversely a measure of the degree of alienation of the individual: of themselves from others; and of themselves from themselves. In other words, a truly emancipated state could only be said to exist where individuals regard one another as members of the human species in the fullest sense, striving towards the highest realisation of their creative potential. Where instead the behaviour of individuals towards one another remains conditioned by fixed notions of natural behaviour, there also will instrumental relations prevail, in which the individual values others for the uses they may have for them.

This brings us to the question of the relations between men and women. For if human emancipation is to be realised at all, it can only be so if all individuals, male and female, are equal. Where this *is not* the case, where notions and structures of inequality are wrapped in naturalistic ideologies, there also human alienation will continue for men as well as for women, so degrading their relations. Where it *is* the case humanity - *as a whole* - can be free. Here is the point, for Marx, at which nature - including such basic drives as the reproductive - becomes human; in other words, something that is no longer a fixed substratum, a ‘given’ that determines human behaviour, but rather something that is transformed by labour and by interactions with others in a social totality.

*In the approach to* woman*as the*spoil*and hand-maid of communal lust is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself, for the secret of this approach has its*unambiguous*, decisive,*plain*and undisguised expression in the relation of man to woman and in the manner in which the*direct*and*natural*species-relationship is conceived. The direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the*relation *of* man*to*woman*. In this natural species-relationship man’s relation to nature is immediately his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately his relation to nature – his own*natural*destination. In this relationship, therefore, is*sensuously manifested*, reduced to an observable*fact*, the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man, or to which nature to him has become the human essence of man. From this relationship one can therefore judge man’s whole level of development.*[[196]](#footnote-196)

Earlier we saw how within class society the creation of ‘the individual’, with their personal characteristics of gender, cultural identity and sense-of-self, occurs *for them* in the realm of consumption; the result of a *mode*-of-consumption. Objectively, as we have also seen, modes of production and consumption are co-dependent; and the world of work of course plays a decisive role in the creation of gendered roles in any given type of society; something that Marx and Engels comment upon throughout their works. And we have considered that the ‘empirical-self’ in its real development, moves between these domains, though under external drives and pressures it does not control. Still, *for the person*, the realisation of their gender as something they experience spontaneously, and as ‘natural’, brings us once more to our mode-of-mind, and so also to the role of repression in its construction - but now with respect to a pivotal question, which is that of the relationship between gender and alienation. For if we are to say that relations between men and women - *i.e.* gender *per se*, rather than gender only in its social or economic aspects - are historically specific rather than universal, then for any given type of society we must also explain the creation of men as individuals that feel themselves to be male, and the creation of women as individuals that feel themselves to be female. And to do that, we must consider men and women as they form - or *are formed* - within their society.

Across Freud’s lifework, there are three key texts that need to be considered for their focus on the origins of gender, alongside of his more general theorising of human sexuality. From 1899, with the publication of his *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud developed his theory of the Oedipus complex in which the boy-child is consumed with jealousy against his father over his mother’s affections.

*He begins to desire his mother herself in the sense with which he has recently become acquainted, and to hate his father anew as a rival who stands in the way of this wish; he comes, as we say, under the dominance of the Oedipus complex.*[[197]](#footnote-197)

Freud provides his most generalised account of gendering in *The Ego and the Id* of 1923. Here, as we have seen, the dialectic of ‘to have’ (possession *of* the parent) and ‘to be’ (identification *with* the parent), played out respectively in the male child and the female child, comprise the competing forces that eventually fix gender in the person.

And finally, there is Freud’s less well known 1925 essay, ‘Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes’. Here, Freud foregrounded the Castration Complex to account for the transference of pre-pubescent clitoral sexual pleasure in the girl-child, to vaginal sexual pleasure and receptivity in the young woman, within his general theory.

What each of Freud’s theoretical phases have in common is the element of repression, not only as the source of an unconscious realm (though it is that, of course), but also as a force that moulds the landscape of the inner self, in its sexed and gendered aspects. It is this element of repression – and especially the way Freud applies it in *The Ego and the Id* (1923) - that can complement Marx’s account of how the individual is formed in their society; providing us also with a model-of-mind that is sufficiently flexible to account for the full variety of human cultural behaviour over historical time and across geographical space.

One influential modern theorisation of gender that aligns with our model thus far comes from Judith Butler in their 1990 book, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Femininity*.[[198]](#footnote-198) From the outset Butler emphasises the unstable nature of the gender/sex distinction. Sex, after all, they argue, ‘happens’ *via* gender in its social aspect. More than this, sex as *sexuality*, develops through gender, and in its cultural representation is shaped by gender. In a manner that brings to mind Freud’s 1925 essay, *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes,* they further suggest a view of sex (over and above mere anatomy) as constructed *by* gender; areas of the body being encultured as erogenous zones, infused with sexual meaning by the erotic culture of the society in which they are rooted; anatomy then becoming the ‘site’ of sexual culture and behaviour, rather than its determination.

Controversially, this leads Butler to question the validity of the term ‘woman’ as a reliable representation within feminist discourse. Indeed, Butler’s radicalism lies in their questioning of representational identity (what they call the ‘metaphysics of substance’) *per se*, for any understanding of sex, sexuality or gender. Taking their cue from de Beauvoir they argue that ‘woman’ is a category without a foundation.

*If there is something right in Beauvoir’s claim that one is not born, but rather* becomes *a woman, it follows that* woman *itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification.*[[199]](#footnote-199)

Here then, ‘sex’ – meaning to *be* a sex - is the ‘discursive pre-discursive’, or the ‘constructed unconstructed’. So, one’s sex, experienced as a given, brute fact of existence, is actually the result of a historical (and pre-historical) layering of gendering processes that, over great spans of time, produces a sex that is felt as ‘natural’.[[200]](#footnote-200)

Crucially Butler emphasises that this ideological sexing eclipses its own genealogy by a mechanism that we can recognise as classically Freudian. For it to work we must experience our sex as *sui generis*, self-sustaining and emerging from its own ontological ground. And for that it relies upon *repression*. Seen as it really is, emerging from constructive social and psychological processes, and without a primary foundation, the sexual binarisation of ‘male’ and ‘female’ fails in its allotted role as a regulator of reproductive behaviour - and human reproduction. Its ruse is essential to its success.

Finally, Butler moves to a radical anti-essentialism in which the purported gendered interior is no more than a phantasm. Gender for Butler does not emerge from a pre-existent self, but rather through its performative aspects as a strategic social act. The body becoming the ‘surface’ upon which gender is *inscribed* in pose, dress and decoration, and the vector by which it is incorporated into the life the person. Gender then, is not something that the person *has*, but rather that which they *perform* in time; and which becomes internalised from without *via* cultural processes.[[201]](#footnote-201)

On this last point then, there is some departure in what Butler says from the position outlined earlier. Anti-psychological, behaviourist and eliminative positions in philosophy have already been criticised. Now we see that Butler apparently moves in a similar direction as Skinner, Ullin and Dennett on the question of a stable interior; a self; or a *cogito*. Against this, we have here traced a recognition of an authentic and deciding self; albeit one that is historical in origin and character. Carefully considered, Butler’s position in fact does allow for a relativistic notion of a gendered intra-psychic, performing agent, although many of their concluding statements on this topic lean heavily towards its temporal, repetitive and outwardly performative aspects, rather than its presence as an enduring, internal - though always contextual - self.

With Butler, we arrive at a position in which sex, far from forming a natural substratum that is overlaid with gender, is rather organised *by* gender. Gender, and by extension culture, provides the causal impetus for sex in all of its behavioural modes; sex then becoming the result of gender, not *vice versa*. But what sense can we make of this with respect to human origins, and the proposition that this theoretical position appears to ride upon; that with the invention of gender human sexual behaviour left behind its animal evolutionary past?

Whereas the material record of the earliest humans from remains and sites of habitation gives us a picture how our pre-historic ancestors looked, travelled and survived, there is nothing that gives such clues about sexual behaviour and the origins of gender. Here we must perforce rely upon scientific imagination and plausible speculation. We can perhaps say that for the earliest hunter-gatherer groups, pregnancy, neonatal care and weaning was a probably matter of group survival. Moreover, the development of technique for hunting, cooking, and the manufacture of clothes, of course (we do know from the material record) required the fashioning and effective use of tools and the practical knowledge that made this possible; knowledge that needed to be transmitted to the youngest members of the group over the extended period of maturation that is distinctive of the human species. Perhaps (and speculating a good deal) we can imagine that in the hominid groups from which *H. s. sapiens* emerged, and possibly early human social groups, some level of pansexualism prevailed, with sexual contact being a frequent means of calming intra-group tensions and maintaining social bonds.[[202]](#footnote-202) Hidden ovulation and female receptivity throughout the menstrual cycle also would have added to the problems of unregulated pregnancy and child-birth for social groups that had to withstand and overcome extreme challenges of climate, environment and sustenance during the great dispersal of the Middle to the Upper-Palaeolithic era.

Jumping from creative general speculation to the matter of reproductive regulation, we can imagine that by the period of around thirty-five to forty-five thousand years ago, during the Transition that saw the emergence of abstract reasoning and higher intelligence, humans had mastered a rudimentary method of controlling child-birth at the level of the group: and that this method was gender.[[203]](#footnote-203) Perhaps by now humans had learnt from brutal and fatal experience, the genetic hazards of incestual sexual relations, leading to the near universal taboo of sexual union between close relatives. The emergence of consanguineous clan-type societies also would also have raised the problem of inter-breeding; the exchange of women between clans, and the emergence of exogamous heterosexuality being a combined solution to that.[[204]](#footnote-204)

**The special place of sex.** The brain of course continues to develop, certainly into a person’s early twenties. But puberty is a stage of extremely rapid change, as neural networks proliferate at an extraordinary rate. The leap in general capacity that this represents has profound consequences for the individual. It is not only one of ability. Rather, many things are occurring at once; with the emergence of abstract reasoning, and the establishment of personal identity and social attachments.

Human societies have long understood the significance of this not only for the individual, but also for the group as a whole, and have laid out clear pathways for the child ahead of this determining stage for social function, gender and social orientation. It is the ‘dialectic-of-self’ involved in the emergence of sex, that shapes outcomes for the individual, giving them their specific social and historical meaning; a dialectic that requires the repression of some possibilities in place of others that emerge as dominant.

The key aspect of this speculation is that we are now talking about intelligent humans, *consciously* dealing with the challenges of survival with which they were faced. Group behaviour was obviously hugely significant for the maintenance of effective social relationships, supporting strategic orientations in the group’s natural environment. This would have required a high level of behavioural regulation and control in all areas of life, including the sexual. Here, we can plausibly imagine, the organised distinction between ‘male’ and ‘female’ became important along with the social, cultural, productive and reproductive roles allotted to each. Our imagination here is helped by the customs of cultural transmission of gender by puberty rituals found until quite recently in tribal societies. One example is that of the boys of the North American Quinault people who would paint rocks with the water monsters they had seen in visions; another comes from the tribes of California whose pubescent youngsters would ingest hallucinogens such as jimsonweed, and paint rocks with images influenced by their visions – the girls painting representations of rattle-snakes (their spirit-helpers), and the boys painting circles, nested curves and human figures.[[205]](#footnote-205)

*A key aspect of these rituals is that the boys and girls focused on different entoptic phenomena. Both sexes would have had the neurological potential to see the full range of entoptics, and we may be fairly certain that the boys’ entoptic forms would have flashed in and out of the girls’ visions, and vice versa. But the guidance given by the shamans who were conducting the rituals encouraged each sex to focus on what were considered to be its appropriate images.* [[206]](#footnote-206)

**Human sociality, adaptability, gender and survival.** The pivotal moment of early human evolution was the emergence of ‘sociality’ itself. The extraordinary ability of human beings to survive in extremely varying environmental conditions, was entirely connected to the emergence of ‘the social group’, with collective intelligence, intergenerational transmission of knowledge, shared technical ingenuity and bonds of solidarity. This moment represents the endpoint (the ‘limit’) of biological evolution, and the starting point (the ‘origin’) of cultural evolution; in other words, a moment of discontinuity made possible by the qualitative leap in intellectual capacity now superfluous to basic physical existence. Prehistoric music, ritual, dance, art and so on, are understood here without any reference to biology in their specific manifestations. Rather they are seen as arising from the creation of shared meanings that tied the individual to their group with bonds of collective memory, group-identity, common belief, story-telling and myth, and group ‘love’ and sacrifice. For all of this, it was the emergence of psychical processes enabling ‘identification’ with others as a general human attribute, that made it possible for the human species to transcend biological evolution. Finally, a crucial aspect of human social attachment was the emergence of ‘gender’, a topic given helpful illumination by the dialectic of ‘to have’ and ‘to be’ found in Freud’s key works.

In such delirious states these youngsters were being guided towards their gendered destinies.[[207]](#footnote-207) However, the dialectic-of-self, described earlier for our model-of-mind would already have been at work in the formation of parentally influenced strivings of identification and possession. With maturation beyond puberty this dialectic would have been closely intertwined with anticipations of social, cultural, productive and reproductive functions, and the acquisition of the skills appropriate to each. In the inhospitable landscapes that our first ancestors encountered, the gendered regulation of sexual behaviour, along with gendered technical skills and essential knowledge that were passed down from elders to youngsters, will have been of vital importance for the survival of the group.

Indeed, a distinction between early life ‘primary socialisation’ processes that are foundational for the person’s development, and ‘secondary socialisation’ processes that orientate the person for their future roles within their social group and wider society, is an established one in theories of social construction. These secondary processes occur often during adolescence and are often also accompanied by rituals that intensify the transformations involved.[[208]](#footnote-208)

Whatever the exact course of events, the central argument here rests upon a single proposition, located at a limit-origin limina. The proposition is that the ‘limit’ in question represents the end of biological causation of human behaviour, over and above the limitations dictated by anatomy; and that the ‘origin’ represents the start of the exclusive dominance of social and cultural causation for all aspects of human behaviour, including the sexual. This counter-intuitive thesis means not only a reversal of the biology-culture dichotomy that makes biology a primary cause of sexual behaviour, but an abandonment of the dichotomy all together. ‘Biology’ here is put aside as factor that explains human sex beyond its obviously mechanical aspects, even as socially mediated; human sex being seen now as exclusively socio-cultural in character.

We can get a sense of the relevance of the notion of a ‘mode-of-mind’ in relation to gender from a reading of Marx’s analysis of the rise of the patriarchal family in the early historical phase of the Roman Republic. In the *Ethnological Notebooks*[[209]](#footnote-209)Marx comments extensively upon the anthropology of his day. The anthropologist Johan Bachofen had postulated a ‘mother-right’ that had once prevailed in tribal, or clan, societies. This suggested both a matriarchal and matrilineal character to these societies: an idea that was transmitted into 19th Century anthropology through the works of Ludwig Lange, Henry Sumner Maine, and Lewis Henry Morgan. The societies traversed included the Iroquois of North America, the Hibernian Celts,[[210]](#footnote-210) the Kānaka Maoli tribes of Hawaii, and the Brahmin clans of India.

These consanguineous societies were more egalitarian than the state-based societies that would come to replace them. Marx was fascinated by anthropological speculations upon the changing social position of women resulting from this historical shift. However, his comments on the works of Lange and Maine in this regard were largely critical, insofar as these anthropologists tended to essentialise ‘the family’; seeing historically particular relations between men and women as natural.[[211]](#footnote-211)

Marx, along with Engels, was far more sympathetic to the work of Morgan, whose great contribution was to treat the family as historical, and as something that varied (and radically so) from one epoch to the next. However, a distinction between the comments of Marx and those of Engels on these anthropological theories also needs to be made.[[212]](#footnote-212) Whereas Engels tended to accept uncritically Morgan’s thesis of ‘mother-right’, Marx was more attuned to the contradictions of the place of women in clan-based societies, and indeed the probability of struggle within them.[[213]](#footnote-213) Actually, the idea of a purported matriarchal and matrilineal nature of such societies is complicated by any number of examples of inequality and, considering the Celts in particular, it is likely that the position of women varied greatly from one tribe to another.

The key theme here is the changing status of women in clan-based societies, as the relative egalitarianism that had prevailed in some cases was suppressed within emerging or conquering class-based states. Whether we consider the historical eclipsing of the ancient Aegean tribes of the Homeric era by the city-states of the time of Plato and Aristotle,[[214]](#footnote-214) or the subsumption of the Celtic tribes under Roman law, changes to the position of women in each case are profound. With the emergence of the patriarchal family specifically, rights of marriage-choice, inheritance, property-ownership, divorce, status within the marriage family, *etc.* were all lost or severely eroded.[[215]](#footnote-215)

In the case of 5th Century Athenian society, the hidden status of women was almost total, with women being exclusively restricted within the domain of the marriage home, along with children, concubines, servants and slaves.[[216]](#footnote-216) Moreover, the removal of boys from the gynaecium from the age of six, into and beyond puberty meant that outside of marriage men were rarely exposed to women socially or sexually; which goes some way to explaining the acceptance, indeed the celebration, of homosexual love in the Grecian society of the Periclean era.[[217]](#footnote-217)

In the case of the Roman Republic, the *manus* - the Roman legislative code that provided the *paterfamilias* with his legal power – at its height in the era of the Punic Wars, gave the male patriarch almost absolute rule over all his family members. With respect to his wives this included entire rights to her dowry, the right to sell his wife and in certain circumstances (and with the agreement of her family relations) to kill her.[[218]](#footnote-218)

That external, physical repression was necessary in the shift to these absolute patriarchies seems highly probable.[[219]](#footnote-219) However, this violence will also have resulted in internalised repression, by which new and extremely oppressive gender-relations became normalised; the new intra-psychical structures of men and women in Roman society cementing a triumphant and naturalised family norm, and with it a new mode-of-mind with respect to gender and sexual relations.

An erosion of the power of the Roman patriarch occurred over time by the incremental transfer of legal powers from the family to the state. With the development of trade and commerce, women were also to be found increasingly in occupations that, whilst they lay outside of legal sanction, were afforded *de facto* toleration in the developing Roman economy.[[220]](#footnote-220) The anomalous position of women in these economic roles was mitigated by a slow process of legal amendments that increasingly sanctioned the position of women-of-means as independent, affording some the status also as *personae* with a degree of legal entitlement.[[221]](#footnote-221)

Whilst social, economic, and political processes would over time weaken the power of the patriarch, the women of the ancient world also had agency in changing their position *vis-à-vis* men. Whilst the female characters of Aristophanes *Lysistrata* provide a comedic picture of women withholding sex to prevent their men leaving for war, the premise of the play is revealing for what it suggests of how its audience understood the potential of women to act collectively. Indeed, it might even have referred to real moments of resistance, long since lost from the historical record. In the case of Rome, when women stormed the Forum in 195 BC, demanding the repeal of the *lex Oppia* that restricted their rights of adornment, Cato the Elder remarked “We have not kept our women individually under control; we now dread them collectively.”

In the *Ethnological Notebooks* Marx reflects upon the probable resistances of women to their unfree status under patriarchal law. Along with socially overt struggle and resistance likely to have accompanied both the implementation of patriarchal oppression, and to its erosion, we can further hypothesise a psychical struggle, as different modes-of-mind clashed between groups and individuals, and within the interior life of the person.

In the modern era, we see the equivalent social and psychological processes with the emergence and historical development of capitalism. Each stage of the development of capitalism in the British context has created shifts in demographic patterns and family type, and has had implications for gender norms. The break-up of the rural extended family with the enclosures of the late 18th was one such stage, as its victims poured into the hellish conditions of the new urban conurbations with little or no family structure intact. The rise of the small nuclear working-class family that could move for work, was another. Furthermore, the entry of women into the workforce in large numbers over the course of the Twentieth Century profoundly altered relations between the sexes, and also the associated perceptions of legitimate gender roles. Each of these successive changes - from the large extended form of the family to the small nuclear form, and then to the single-parent family so common today – has loosened previously rigid gender norms. The result, in different phases has been the appearance of new gender roles and identities (including dominant female, non-binary and gender-fluid types) that now compete with the traditional ‘dominant male – submissive female’ binary model of hetero-normative gender-relations. These processes have led to a cultural drift from the traditional binary of ‘male and female’, as well as abrupt and radical alternatives to it. Always, the elements of our mode-of-mind have driven the process, as the changing forces of the modes of production and consumption shape the dialectic-of-self, in turn creating conscious apprehensions of social roles and survival strategies; these then being shaped by interwoven economic and gender identifications in the mind of the developing person.

**Freedom, memory and the ‘return of the repressed’**

In each of our examples of mode-of-mind, repression has been an indispensable element. It is repression that suppresses possible modes-of-mind as unrealistic, unfeasible, or even dangerous; allowing some (or one) to emerge as dominant, to be expressed outwardly, as the person takes up their place in their social group. This mode-of-mind has been shaped by a dialectic-of-self that moves between the poles of a self (I) that is experienced moment-by-moment, and an anticipated self - the ‘objective I’ (I*o*) towards which they strive.

From this process emerges (‘precipitates’) an ‘ideal I’ (I*i*), representing a higher self the person aspires to be. This ‘ideal I’ is drawn from the processes of identification described by Freud in his *The Ego and the Id* (1923), as the mind of the child and the developing adolescent gravitates to one parent or the other.

These intra-psychical processes are also interwoven with anticipations of a future self that are more outwardly social, cultural, and economic in character; anticipations that directly reflect the modes of consumption and production of any given society.

All of this involves the repression of psychical material that does not fit in the mode-of-mind that eventually emerges as dominant, or that must be hidden from the conscious life of the person for them to be successful in their society. The result is determinations in the life of the person that are known only through their effects, whilst remaining unrecognised in any more explicit sense. These internal determinations become crucial to those aspects of their identity that they experience spontaneously, and as intrinsically personal – gender being the most obvious example. Where they contain unresolved tensions and ‘forgotten’ traumas, they may be sources of anxiety, disturbance, and unhappiness.

This repressed material however, although not normally consciously apprehended, does not disappear. Rather it remains as an active force that is normally hidden from consciousness. This material can also become expressed culturally and at the social level, as well as the individual. Myth and legend, for instance, can carry the repressed memory of earlier cultures that are separated from a society by many generations. In the *Ethnological Notebooks*, Marx speculates that despite the unfreedom of women under the 5th Century Athenian state, collective memories of lost freedoms remained in the goddess stories of Hestia, Hera and Athene Pallas.[[222]](#footnote-222) Indeed, memories of great hardships, or of great struggles and triumphs, can be identified in the oral traditions of pre-literate peoples and in the folk-lore of rural communities. Within urban societies, working-class traditions carry the memories of great battles and victories from one generation to the next. These traditions may disappear, ‘forgotten’ from any conscious recollection within communities. And yet, with the eruption of new struggles, these traditions and their stories will reappear with a new relevance, indicating that they had never been fully forgotten. Rather they had existed still in a repressed collective memory, awaiting their time once more. In the case of the Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, triggered by the murder of a black man by a police officer in Minneapolis, the movement that exploded in the US and around the world became quickly about interpretations of history. Old grievances and local controversies that had been eclipsed by the mundanities of daily survival in black America, were reignited as stories half-forgotten were reawakened with urgent and vivid relevance.

In all these examples, we see not only repression at work, and the creation of a collective repressed unconscious, but also how repressed material can ‘return’, reminding us sometimes with sudden force that it had never really disappeared.[[223]](#footnote-223)

Finally, there is an ethical dimension to these reflections upon a Marxist ‘model-of-mind’, the ‘mode-of-mind’ that is its consequence, and the role of repression within it. Our general model-of-mind is premised upon a human mind that is totipotent in its capacity, characterised by a ‘radical variability’ that allows for imaginative possibilities that go far beyond the literal limitations of the person’s social and physical environment. In this sense the human brain is seen here as an organ of limitless configurations of thinking, behaviour, theory, and hypothesis. This potential for human creativity is intensive as well as extensive, reaching into all aspects of human behaviour and inter-personal relationships, as well as into outward behaviour directed towards the physical environment.

We have also seen that the ‘dialectic-of-self’ ends in the intra-psychical structures of the person, becoming fixed into a mode-of-mind that enables them to function within their society, and survive in the face of external challenges. They are shaped by the social relations by and into which they develop. The fixed structures of the mind are co-dependent with the fixed social relationships of which they are the result.

It is here we find our ethical imperative, underpinned by a co-dependence of fact and value. For where social relations are oppressive, the minds of all within the fixed social relationships involved are trapped within a social and psychical logic that is inimical to creative development. For the oppressed the result is agonies of mind and of body, of course. For the oppressor the cost of their advantage and luxury, is the loss of their creative potential. Whilst our sympathies are entirely with the oppressed, it is worth acknowledging the self-deceptions and neurotic perversions of thought that characterise the mind of the oppressor. The resulting situation for humanity is one of debasement (value) and destruction (fact). Here our desire for a better world, interweaves with our notions of self and identity, scientifically understood.

**Part III: Historical interactions of Marxism and psychoanalysis**

## Mind, revolution and reaction

**Sex and the Russian Revolution**

An effect of revolution and indeed of social movements of sufficient depth and scale is that mental and intellectual life are convulsed in ways that previously were unimaginable: ideas deemed ‘foreign’ before, find a new home; theories developed in the cultural undergrowth of repressive states erupt into popular consciousness; and what once was strange and feared becomes familiar and influential. In the intellectual ferment that revolution creates, new creative vistas open up that overthrow the long-accepted modes of expressive output. This was true of revolutionary Russia during the 1920s.

New cultural movements emerged - such as Proletkult (striving to create a proletarian culture that would break decisively and immediately from bourgeois culture), the Scythians (advocating a ‘Revolution of the Spirit’, and attached to the left Socialist Revolutionaries, rather than to the Bolsheviks) and Futurism - that wedded themselves to the Revolution, albeit to different aspects of it. The Futurists particularly, the first artistic movement to attach themselves to the Bolsheviks, flourished throughout the 1920s.

Iconoclastic towards the past, they and their most famous representative, the poet and playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky, considered themselves the vanguard of the new culture to be created by the Revolution.[[224]](#footnote-224)

Indeed these years saw an openness to innovations across all of the arts, and a flourishing of creative expression without any necessary doctrinal allegiance with Marxism.

*In art and literature, the 1920s were marked by many valuable achievements. Outstanding writers who identified with the Revolution gave it a kind of authenticity by their work: these included Babel, the young Fadayev, Pilnyak, Mayakovsky, Yesenin, Artem Vesyyoly, and Leonov. Their creativity is proof of the fact that the Revolution was not a mere* coup d’etat *but an explosion of forces truly present in Russian society. But other writers who by no means favoured the Soviet system were also active at this time, for example, Pasternak, Akhmatova, and Zamyatin.*[[225]](#footnote-225)

Some of the Russian names of world cinema – Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Dziga Vertov – appear in this period. At the same time Vsevolod Meryerhold was creating constructionist theatre with techniques that privileged gesture, movement, and rhythm over spoken language to connect with the audience.

Along with novelty in the arts, new ways of organising personal life were thrown up also. The sheer progressivism of the Bolshevik government became evident quickly after it took power in October 1917. The emancipation of women in its social, legal, political, and sexual aspects, was a central concern. Issues that arose from or overlapped with questions of gender and sex were framed socially, rather than being medicalised or seen in terms of biological necessity. With respect to medical practices, socially oriented types of practice were adopted. Under the Commissar for Health, Nikolai Semashko, the pre-Revolutionary tradition of social medicine associated with pioneering figures such as A. P. Dobroslavin and G. V. Khlopin became properly established.[[226]](#footnote-226) Under the Code of Laws of the Russian Revolution, drafted within weeks of the October Revolution, the Czarist ‘anti-sodomy’ laws were repealed. The age of consent for same-sex sexual liaison was reduced to fourteen years.[[227]](#footnote-227) So, where it was a crime in other parts of Europe carrying sentences of up to five years in Germany and ‘life’ in England, in revolutionary Russia in this period consenting same-sex sexual activity between men, from having been fiercely repressed before the Revolution, became legal.

Popular attitudes to sex were also a part of this ferment, especially amongst the young of the urban centres. Indeed, during the 1920s the ‘sex question’ was to become an intensely debated topic in all its ideological, political and literary aspects. Moreover, the subject of sex resonated with the social turbulence of the 1920s *via* the notion of a political ‘collective body’ that served as its ideological metaphor.[[228]](#footnote-228) After the 1905 Revolution a new fascination with sexual relations that was evident in literary outputs, newspapers, diaries and correspondences had fed into the emergence of a new liberal-civic culture in the metropolitan centres.[[229]](#footnote-229) In 1917, an immediate consequence of the October Revolution was a surge of interest in matters of sexual life from young workers and students.[[230]](#footnote-230) The revolutionary idealism regarding sex was evident also in the early policy of the Bolshevik government, contrasting starkly with the horrors of illegal abortions and the abandonment of illegitimate children that had characterised working-class and peasant life before it.

*Deliverance from this hell was of immediate importance to the revolution. Only weeks after seizing power, with the country slipping into civil war, the Bolsheviks began to institute new laws and codes that reshaped the meaning and function of the family. Church weddings were no longer recognized. Divorce could be quickly granted to one party without explanation. Entering into or ending a marriage meant simply a reshuffling of paper. Doctors could perform legal abortions. Because illegitimacy was no longer a social category, a man was legally responsible for all his children, not merely those fathered in marriage. Later, cohabitation or de facto marriages were recognized as legal unions. The goal was to give women equal status in marriage and to protect them if a union dissolved; to ensure that no one was trapped in a union that had gone wrong; to allow women to terminate a pregnancy if they could not support a child (at this time the state could not always assume charge); and to safeguard all children, regardless of the condition of their birth. Sex was to be recognized in terms of both procreation and pleasure, and it was to be treated openly. A campaign of sexual education would focus on contraception, hygiene, and preventing venereal disease.*[[231]](#footnote-231)

The ’new proletarian morality’ of this period encompassed legal relaxations of the laws of marriage and divorce, so that breaking the marital bond became as simple as entering it, the abolition of discrimination against children born out of wedlock and the lifting of all restrictions on abortion.[[232]](#footnote-232)

It was during the years of the New Economic Policy however, between the end of ‘war communism’ and the abrupt impositions of economic centralisation under Stalin by the late 1920s, that we find most evidence of a new climate of sexual liberation amongst the young. Despite the need for the regulation of family life, the responsibility for children, the exhaustions of the civil war period and its effect upon the nervous condition of thousands of young workers,[[233]](#footnote-233) and the difficulties of accessing contraception, experimental attitudes of sexual freedom and free love were influential amongst students, such as those of the Sverdlov Communist University. The attractions of unfettered individualistic sexuality for young workers attending university was in fact seen as a problem within the Soviet government during these years; raising concerns about a perceived new culture of essentially bourgeois self-indulgence that turned the individual away from the tasks of the Revolution.[[234]](#footnote-234) However, even amongst sections of the politically austere Komosol youth movement, such ideas were sufficiently current to provoke controversy and eventually dissension in its ranks.

**‘Sciences of the mind’ in revolutionary Russia**

With respect to understanding the mind and human behaviour, the theorising that had dominated Russian psychology in the years leading up to the 1917 Revolution derived from the work of the 19th Century neuroscientist, Ivan Sechenov. Sechenov had concentrated his scientific work upon physical reflex actions and had conflated mental processes with these. This emphasis upon outward and observable action and reaction made Sechenov’s work a precursor to the behaviourism of later post-Revolution psychologists such as Ivan Pavlov and Vladimir Becheterev. This methodological insistence upon observable behaviour would later eclipse those types of psychology that looked instead to subjective inner states of the psyche. By the mid-1930s, Soviet psychological sciences operated under a state imperative that productivity, industry and the intensification of labour were the ultimate aims of the human sciences. Similarly, in the study of human movement, whilst Nikolai Bernstein made important breakthroughs in the study of physical reflexes, his achievements were celebrated within the Soviet Union for their contribution to the understanding of biophysical functionality and fine motor control during manual labour.

Despite this dominant behaviourist paradigm, for a decade and a half a new generation of Soviet psychologists pioneered the exploration of the inner world of the psyche. In the wake of the Revolution, it was this opening up of the theoretical horizons of psychology that made possible the introduction of Freudian psychoanalysis and more generally an enlightenment in the study of human behaviour. The full significance of the Revolution and the opportunities it afforded however, were not immediately apparent to the most established figures international psychoanalytical movement. In his 1921 report to the Viennese Psychoanalytical Society, the most prominent figure in pre-revolutionary Russian psychoanalysis, Nikolai Osipov, gave a picture of a movement in disarray.

*…in fact it has been impossible to collect and publish accounts either of proceedings of meetings or of papers read and discussed. Scientific journals have entirely ceased to appear during the last three years; the only journal concerning itself with Freudian conceptions, Psychotherapy, stopped publication in 1917* [sic] *owing to financial difficulties.*[[235]](#footnote-235)

What Osipov could not have appreciated, having already moved to Prague at the time of his report, was how the terrain had changed for any discipline that came within the broad family of the ‘human sciences’.

The great name of experimental psychology at the time of the October Revolution was Konstantin Kornilov. Kornilov’s work, like that of the behaviourists, concerned outwardly observable physical and mental reactions. Kornilov however incorporated theoretical elements that made his approach distinct from the basic behaviourist model. Human action for Kornilov, could not be conflated with physiological processes; nor was it seen as a simple matter of responsive reflexes to environmental stimuli. Rather, in Kornilov’s reactology, a dialectic occurred between the external world and the interior world. This interior was no longer a merely an effect of objective causal factors. It was active in its own right, albeit in interaction with the external processes.

This view of human consciousness as being active and having a generative character, rather than passively reflective of objects outside of it, did have its precursors in a pre-revolutionary tradition of Russian psychology. Within the psychological sciences an Idealistic theoretical paradigm that attributed a mental activity with a dynamic that is independent of external reality had become established with the founding of the Institute of Psychology of Moscow in 1912 and in the work of Troitski and Grot.[[236]](#footnote-236) The Institute’s founder, Chelpanov (Kornilov’s immediate predecessor) brought a student, G. Shpet, to contribute to its work. Shpet was later to become a strong influence on a young Lev Vygotsky, in particular emphasising the roles of language and culture in the formation of conscious life.[[237]](#footnote-237)

In the emerging area of child development then, the opening up the psychical interior had made possible Vygotsky’s theoretical speculations and empirical work. In Vygotsky’s theoretical model, intrapersonal experience is the result of the meeting of mental processes that emerge from within the psyche and of those that have their origins in its interactions with the objective world. The processes involved are mediated by cultural artefacts, and crucially language. The infant argued Vygotsky, develops mentally along two lines: linguistic intelligence; and non-linguistic intelligence. In the first phase of language acquisition, the very young child develops a ‘social language’ that mimics what they hear in their world. Later the non-linguistic intelligence that they develop crosses the linguistic line, and in-so-doing they begin to think linguistically, eventually mastering their own inner language or ‘ego-speech’. In this developmental movement, the language that they interiorise brings with it the social and historical context they inhabit, the child thus rooting themselves in the world. For Vygotsky this led to the development of ‘higher mental processes’, as the child’s learning made possible the growth of their cognitive framework; this learning itself facilitated by the framework provided for it by their social environment, or ‘zone of proximal development’.[[238]](#footnote-238) Vygotsky was to alter his theoretical orientations towards a psychological ‘objectivism’ after 1932 as the field of psychology become increasing politicised. During the 1920s however, his work was characterised by a focus upon subjectivity in learning and child development. Affective factors, personality, fantasy, and imagination all feature in this phase of Vygotsky’s output. The concept of ‘perezhivanie’ captured moments of ‘deep learning’ which transform the person’s mental horizons; signs are active elements in complex and discursive subjective processes; and the notion of ‘sense’ as distinct from ‘meaning’ represented the world of feeling conjured up by a word, though not expressed in its formal definition. For the Marxist Vygotsky in this period, social-historical processes provided the cultural mediations that made possible the psychological growth of the child.

By the early 1930s a third position in psychology had emerged. Along with the behaviourist ‘reflexology’ of figures such as Pavlov and Bechterev, and the ‘reactology’ of Kornilov, there had also emerged the ‘dialectical-materialist psychology’ of Rubinstein, who became the Chair of Psychology at the Hertzen Pedagogical Institute of Leningrad in 1930. For Rubinstein, consciousness and outwardly observable activity formed a unity. Consciousness could not be understood in terms of mental processes that are independent of the objective world, but rather as operating in continuous conjunction with it. Rubinstein’s approach was to become a dominant paradigm in Soviet psychology throughout the 1930s, and most of the 1940s. In 1948 however, he was ousted from his academic post as ‘Pavlovianism’ was imposed by bureaucratic fiat as the new orthodoxy for a ‘Marxist psychology’.

**The rise of soviet psychoanalysis**

The flowering of interest in the ‘internal life’ of the mind in experimental and theoretical psychology, as well as public interest in the ‘sex-question’ during the 1920s, fertilised a new movement in psychoanalysis. The concerns of the Russian psychoanalytical community however, were no longer those predominantly of personal neurosis recorded in a catalogue of individual analytical case studies - often of members of the minor aristocracy. Rather, as Russian psychoanalysis was to develop over the next ten years, its concerns would be those of social psychopathology, of education and of social settlement. Its motivations would become rooted in humanist-rationalist enlightenment on the one hand, and in state imperatives on the other. Osipov in his 1921 report to the official international movement was unaware of psychoanalytical work that was in fact becoming established and beginning to flourish. In Petrograd, Tatiana Rosenthal for instance, chief physician at the Institute of Brain Pathology - and, unlike Osipov, a supporter of the Revolution - developed therapeutic techniques for educational work with learning-disabled children that drew upon the Freudian and Adlerian schools of psychoanalysis. She was also to apply psychoanalytical insights to literary analysis in their 1920 publication that explored ‘the unconscious’ in the characters in Dostoevsky’s novellas.

By 1921 Moscow had also become the home to a newly formed psychoanalytical group striving to understand the roots of human creativity. The leading figures in this group, principally Ivan Ermakov and Moshe Wulff, had published previously in Freud’s own journal and so were known in the West. The group soon attracted new members, and by 1922 had refashioned itself as the Russian Psychoanalytic Society. As it grew, its concerns became more diverse. So, along with the continuing engagement with the roots of artistic expression and clinical analysis there was amongst the newer members an interest in the theory and practice of education and of child development. Otto Schmidt, who was responsible for the pedagogical work of the group was now working with young researchers such as Pavel Blonskii, Stanislav Shatskii and Lev Vygotsky.

Independently of developments in Moscow a second centre of psychoanalytical work had by 1922 become established in the town of Kazan. Under the energetic leadership of Alexander Luria, the work of the group spanned a similar range of medical, psychological, and artistic interests as that of the Moscow society. By the Spring of 1923, the leading figures of the Kazan group had taken up an invitation to move to Moscow to join the burgeoning psychoanalytical community there. Luria himself took up a position in the Moscow Institute of Psychology. He collaborated there with Vygotsky and Alexei Leontiev who was later to develop the cultural-historical model of the analysis of human behaviour. Luria’s new position was effectively a government appointment. Growing in numbers certainly, but also in professional status, the society had by the end of 1922 become the Institute for Psychoanalysis.

By establishing a properly constituted training programme, curriculum, and clinic (all required for official recognition by the International Psychoanalytical Association) the Institute for Psychoanalysis had made Moscow the third centre of the international psychoanalytical movement, along with Vienna and Berlin (soon to be followed by London, Budapest and New York). This official status had been won in the face of stiff resistance from the many leading figures around Freud who viewed the Bolshevik government with deep suspicion. Indeed, it had only been with the intervention of Freud himself that the misgivings of the most avowedly anti-Marxist figures of the international society had been overcome.[[239]](#footnote-239) The presence in Moscow of Sabina Spielrein who had been a member of the society in Vienna and whom Freud knew well seems likely to have been a factor in his decision to grant full status to the Moscow group. So also, was the fact that by the end of 1923, Russian membership represented one eighth that of the psychoanalytical movement worldwide.[[240]](#footnote-240)

The Institute ran introductory courses on psychoanalysis as well as courses on children’s psychoanalysis and literary analysis. An ambitious publishing programme was launched that aimed to translate into Russian all of the most important psychoanalytical works. An out-clinic was established to which any and all Russian citizens could obtain access: a reversal of the necessarily elitist character of Austrian and German psychoanalytical practice that relied upon a paying clientele. A clinic for psychologically disturbed children was also established. This was important in the context of a Russian society emerging from the trauma of civil war. Many thousands of children had been displaced and many had lost their families. These children, the Besprisorniki [the Unattended] were surviving in the tenements of Russia’s cities. Their rehabilitation and settlement posed a significant challenge to the Soviet state. Asja Lacis, a Latvian Bolshevik, had been charged with this task in the city of Orel, and achieved remarkable results with precious little in the way of resources. A clinic that specialised in children’s therapy using the methods of European psychoanalysis in this context was seen as offering something important in the struggling socialist republic.

The Institute was also remarkable in becoming the first state sponsored psychoanalytical institute. The process by which this came about was not straightforward. Key to the success of the application for state support would be the acceptance of the State Scientific Soviet (SSS) and its pedagogical arm. In their report of September 1922 to the scientific-pedagogical committee of the SSS the Moscow group highlighted the contributions that psychoanalysis had made and could make to medicine, psychology, sociology, and the problems of everyday life. They further stressed its relevance to “artistic creativity, labor relations, religious and philosophical formulations” and argued that “in psychiatry, psychoanalysis provides new and fruitful possibilities ...”.[[241]](#footnote-241) This appeal for state endorsement and hoped-for support was followed by a submission of the Charter of the Psychoanalytic Society that outlined its extensive ongoing and planned clinical, pedagogical and publishing activities. It also explicitly confirmed the Society’s administrative (and by implication, political) subordination to the government. This latter element of the Society’s appeal for state support highlights a tension that was inevitable in the conjunctural context of revolutionary Russian society in the 1920s. Ideological work was inevitably linked to the solving of practical problems in this period: not least in the areas of psychology and education. Moreover, any position taken within the human sciences had to establish its relationship to Marxist theory and any theoretical stance that could be interpreted as in some senses rivalling Marxism, would find itself caught up in a political game. This was truer still of interpretations of human behaviour premised upon the individualism and bourgeois prejudices intrinsic to many of Freud’s formulations. One consequence of this situation was the closing down in 1923 of the Institute’s children’s home that had been run by Vera Schmidt and Sabina Spielrein. Notwithstanding this setback, a high level of relative tolerance remained, allowing the psychoanalysts to continue their efforts for the rest of their programme. The Institute’s publishing through the State Publishing House for example continued unabated, with fifteen volumes of key psychoanalytical works appearing between 1922 and 1923. This publishing fed an eager and expanding readership with each volume rapidly selling out.

**The demise of soviet psychoanalysis**

The clinical and training activities of the staff and associates of the Institute continued through the 1920s. However, by the middle of the decade the relationship between psychoanalysis and Marxism had become an issue of increasingly intense theoretical debate. By this time the defensive position of the Revolution internationally was beginning to shape and distort ideological positions in all areas of public life. Psychoanalysis, straddling the worlds of psychiatric practice and medical science on the one hand and ideology and politics on the other, was particularly vulnerable in this situation. Standing within a tradition that had originated in the west and at the high point of *fin de siècle* European society, with its associations of decadence and literary and philosophical irrationalism, the Freudians were to become increasingly politically isolated. Still, it is noteworthy that up until 1925, theoretically sophisticated articles defending psychoanalytical perspectives in the interpretation of social behaviour and religion appeared in leading Bolshevik journals such as *Under the Banner of Marxism* and *The Press and the Revolution*.[[242]](#footnote-242) That said, the increasingly polemical and aggressive tenor of the articles opposing ‘Freudism’ from 1924 onwards was the prelude to the onslaught that was soon to follow. By 1929 Wilhelm Reich was to declare that “It is impossible to speak of a “psychoanalytical movement” existing in the Soviet Union ...”.[[243]](#footnote-243)

That psychoanalysis - and the schools of thought, clinical practice and pedagogy that were associated with it and that in many senses existed in tension with Marxist orthodoxies - was allowed to exist and indeed flourish at all in the early 1920s, was made possible by a political tolerance emanating from the most senior levels of the Bolshevik government. In the case of Lenin, the evidence is mainly inferential. The reports of the pedagogical arm of the State Scientific Soviet for example, went directly to the Commissar for the Enlightenment and Education, Anatoly Lunacharsky. Lunacharsky, who was on personal terms with Lenin, would have had to approve any decisions regarding the Russian Psychoanalytic Institute. There is also the high governmental level of many of the supporters of psychoanalysis and contributors to the theoretical defence of psychoanalysis to consider.[[244]](#footnote-244) Otto Schmidt for example, was a leading member of the Institute as well as being director of the State Publishing House at the time that it produced The Psychoanalytic and Psychological Library of Freud’s published works. Lenin, receiving regular digest reports from all the sections of government, could not but have known about these developments. For Trotsky, who had been acquainted with the psychoanalytic circles during his time in Vienna between 1907 and 1914, we can say much more. In a 1923 letter to Pavlov he describes himself as being impressed by the Freudian approaches to psychological problems.[[245]](#footnote-245) Other explicit statements on the issue suggest a supportive intellectual attitude to psychoanalytical theory. For instance, whilst Freud’s formulations could be ‘exaggerated’ and ‘paradoxical’ regarding the ‘sex-element in the forming of individual character and social consciousness’, they were also ‘significant’ and potentially ‘fertile’.[[246]](#footnote-246) Psychoanalytical theory was, he stated, compatible with materialism.[[247]](#footnote-247) As to its relationship to Marxism “It would be too simple and crude ... to turn one’s back on it.”[[248]](#footnote-248) Furthermore, transformation of the human psyche would be central to any future communist society.

*There can really be no doubt about the fact that the humans of the future will be communitarian citizens, much more interesting and attractive beings with a very different psyche from ours.*[[249]](#footnote-249)

Trotsky’s attitude to psychoanalysis can be broadly characterised as ‘scientific’: he regarded the ideas of Freud and the psychoanalysts as having a quasi-scientific hypothetical status comparable (reflecting the science of his day) to that of electrons, ions and relativity.[[250]](#footnote-250) For Trotsky, they were not to be discarded for reasons of party stricture.

Finally, as late as 1932, in a speech delivered to the Danish Social Democratic student group in Copenhagen, we see a now exiled Trotsky, celebrating the importance of Freud’s work in presaging the new dawn of a future communist humanity.

*Psycho-analysis, with the inspired hand of Sigmund Freud, has lifted the cover of the well which is poetically called the “soul”. And what has been revealed? Our conscious thought is only a small part of the work of the dark psychic forces. Learned divers descend to the bottom of the ocean and there take photographs of mysterious fishes. Human thought, descending to the bottom of its own psychic sources must shed light on the most mysterious driving forces of the soul and subject them to reason and to will.*[[251]](#footnote-251)

The surge of interest in psychoanalytical thinking measured in public readership and state support for the professional and literary activities of the Institute was brief. From the mid-1920s onwards the climate became colder for any working psychologists, clinical practitioners and theoreticians associated with the Freudian school. Certainly, by late 1920’s, the situation had become very difficult indeed for such figures and for most, untenable.

By 1925 the figure of Stalin was looming large within the Soviet leadership. Lenin had died the year before. Trotsky had been side-lined into essentially technical work. Collaborating with Nikolai Bukharin and reacting to the defeat of revolutions abroad, Stalin had formulated the doctrine of ‘Socialism in One Country’. The formal adoption of this slogan in January 1926 inaugurated an era of brutal industrial realignment. This was driven by an intensive process of sate-capital accumulation and of forced collectivisation of the peasantry in large parts of Russia. The centralisation of political power required for this new direction now reached into all areas of intellectual and professional life. In this situation the ‘science’ of any given area of activity was increasingly subordinated to political imperatives. In the area of biological and agricultural research, to cite one notorious and well-known case, Trofim Lysenko’s promotion of agricultural policy premised on the idea that vernalisation (the artificial cold treatment that triggers Winter wheat to grow in the Spring) is based upon a heritable trait (which it is not) on the Lamarkian model was given state endorsement because of its convenient ideological overtones.[[252]](#footnote-252) By the early 1930s Lysenko himself had been afforded the status of a hero of Soviet science despite the catastrophic implications of his doctrine for Russian agricultural production.[[253]](#footnote-253)

This politicisation of scientific debate spelt the end for psychoanalysis in the Soviet Union. By the time of the 1930 Congress on Human Behaviour personal associations with Freudianism especially had become professionally dangerous. Speech after speech hammered home the message that the purpose of psychological work was that of socialist construction: to produce a ‘socialist psychology’ grounded in the categories of Marxism. Theoretical work premised upon an integration of psychoanalysis with Marxism, or upon notions of ‘compatibility’, was ruled out of court: reasoned debate was over.

Another motivation for the assault on psychoanalysis lay in state attitudes to sex and sexuality. The stabilisation of the family became an over-riding priority for the new Russian ‘socialism’. Talk of free sexual relations, the need to overcome the repressive functions of the family and acceptance of homosexuality as an authentic expression of love, were now condemned in literature and in government pronouncements. The central concern with sex within Freudian thinking meant that it came squarely into the firing zone for the new generation of Soviet ideologists. In these circumstances, individuals began to look to their own survival. Some, such as Zalkind, defected to the anti-Freudian camp.[[254]](#footnote-254) Others such as Luria and Vygotsky retreated into the safer field of pedology (the study of child behaviour and development). On that basis, active psychological research did continue into the early 1930s. Vygotsky in particular was to produce innovative theoretical formulations that were only fully appreciated with the re-issuing of his works after the death of Stalin and their translation and publication in the West. Still, by the end of that decade, notwithstanding the occasional respectful gesture towards its insights in official encyclopaedias,[[255]](#footnote-255) psychoanalysis as a recognised professional discipline in Russia and its affiliated republics was dead.

## Trends in the West

**Western Marxism and the ‘turn to Freud’**

As the Russian psychoanalysists became increasingly - and dangerously – politically isolated from the mid-1920s onwards, interest in the potential for fruitful exchanges between Marxism and Freudianism was developing in other parts of Europe. In the early 1920s in Austria a young Wilhelm Reich had established a professional relationship with Sigmund Freud. In 1922 Reich took up a position at Freud’s psychoanalytic outpatient clinic in Vienna, the Ambulatorium, and by 1924 had become its assistant director. In the same year he became director of training at Freud’s Psychoanalytical Institute. Between 1924 and 1930 Reich was to conduct pioneering work in sex-counselling in the working-class districts of Vienna. As part of his ‘Sex-Pol’[[256]](#footnote-256) work he founded six clinics in the city and organised a mobile service that took sex-counselling advice out to its suburbs. This work had two consequences for Reich. The first was intellectual. His observations of the squalor of many of the working-class districts and of the mentally scarred and emotionally traumatised state of many working-class men and women as a result of the war, led him to focus upon the role of social environment as a cause of neurosis, rather than looking exclusively to purely biographical and internal factors. The second effect for Reich was reputational. The advice offered by Reich’s clinics was entirely free of moral tone or inhibition. The philosophy was based upon an acknowledgement of unrepressed sexual experience; and the support given was practical and prophylactic in nature with on-the-spot contraceptive fittings for women. In Catholic Austria this was courageous and provides an early glimpse of Reich’s personal radicalism that would tip over all too tragically into iconoclasm and borderline insanity in his final years. In the later 1920s Reich’s Marxism was converging with his commitment to sex-therapy and psychoanalysis. In 1928 he joined the Austrian Communist Party following the shooting down of demonstrators during the Viennese workers’ revolt of July 1927. In 1929 he had published his ‘Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis’[[257]](#footnote-257) in the bilingual (German/Russian) journal *Under the Banner of Marxism*. It was during his trip to the Soviet Union that same year however, that he became finally convinced of the need to achieve a synthesis of Marxism and psychoanalysis. We will come to Reich shortly to consider his applications of Freudian concepts to social analysis. For the moment it is enough to note the concern for sexual liberation that motivated Reich’s interest in psychoanalysis. His interest in the ideas of Freud in this period was that of the revolutionary thinker committed to personal and social transformation.

Whilst the brief experiment in a Marxism open to psychoanalytical theory had risen and fallen by the beginning of the 1930s in Russia, a group of Marxist sociologists and philosophers associated with the Institute of Social Research (loosely affiliated to the University of Frankfurt at Maine) were moving in apparently similar directions. Though the openness to non-Marxist thinkers was evident, the motivations of this group of theoreticians were different to those of the Moscow psychologists of the early 1920s and of Reich. By the early 1930s the chief names connected to the Institute were concerned above all to explain the retreat of the revolutionary tide in Western Europe, the rise of Stalinism in Russia and of fascism in Italy and Germany and the stabilisation of capitalism that was evident in countries such as France, Britain and the USA by the late 1920s. Their engagements with Freud, critical though they were, tended towards the most pessimistic side of his theorising: repression; deference to the father figure rooted in the Oedipus complex; and the death instinct that runs through his meta-psychology. Freud was not the only non-Marxist thinker with whom the group engaged theoretically. Other influences included Weber, Durkheim, Kant, Simmel, and Tonnies amongst others. Key names of this first generation of what would become known as the (early) Frankfurt School of social theorists and sociologists were: Max Horkheimer; Theodore Adorno; Erich Fromm; and Herbert Marcuse. The wider orbit of the school included Walter Benjamin and Wilhelm Reich himself.

In the years that led up to the Second World War, during the War and in the years that followed, these social theorists through their various research projects and collaborations - and despite the underlying note of despair that was forgivable for a generation of radical intellectuals witnessing the twin horrors of Stalinism and Nazism in their own time – produced analytically insightful and empirically rich sociological studies of capitalist society. These were also studies, in which ‘Marxism’ of a form - that is a form that whilst amalgamated with other theoretical traditions of thought, was also creative and non-dogmatic - was to survive, as ‘official Marxism’ became sclerotized under the rigid control of increasingly Stalinised communist parties across Europe. Some of the Marxists whose names are still with us as major reference points of modern social theory, at this time looked to psychoanalysis for answers to the questions confronting them. The published theoretical and empirical work of these figures from the late 1920s through to the late 1940s together represent the foundation of what was to become known as Freudo-Marxism. These figures, with varying degrees of success, tried to combine the theoretical categories of Marxism and psychoanalysis.

Working under the darkening shadow of the European political scene and seeking to explain the failure of the western European working-class to resist Hitler’s rise to power, the theoretical Marxist Theodore Adorno, looked to Freud for illumination. As early as 1932 Adorno identified Freudian themes in his analysis of what he called the ‘culture industry’. Massified forms of entertainment for Adorno, employed the introjections of the super-ego to conjure up images and associations of commoditised consumable products. However, it was in his work with Max Horkheimer that the full implications of the application of Freudian categories for a social psychology of support for fascist parties - and in relation to consumer capitalism in North America - became apparent. In their joint writing in this period, they explored the cultural manipulation of the person, already weakened by the incorporation of the family into structures and processes of mass society. In the *Dialectic of the Enlightnement* they laid out a blueprint for the ways in which ‘the individual’ becomes increasingly prey to the control of repressive ideologies that oppose their own material interests.[[258]](#footnote-258) By positing the abstract individual - removed from organic collectivities of extended community roots - as the ‘economic cell’ that formed the basis of capitalist society and locating this also within powerful forces of psychological and emotional assimilation into commoditised social relationships Adorno and Horkheimer created a picture of the defeated and atomised person, incapable of critical thought. In this spiritually and mentally impoverished state the isolated person becomes vulnerable to the kinds of irrationalism, anxiety and paranoid fears that had once characterised the Dark Ages. With the rise of massified society under capitalism:

*Culture became wholly a commodity disseminated as information without permeating the individuals who acquired it. Thought became restricted to the acquisition of isolated facts. Conceptual relationships were rejected as uncomfortable and useless effort. The aspect of development in thought, all that is genetic and intensive in it, is forgotten and levelled down to the immediately given, to the extensive. Today the order of life allows no room for the ego to draw spiritual or intellectual conclusions. The thought which leads to knowledge is neutralized and used as a mere qualification on specific labor markets and to heighten the commodity value of the personality. And so that self-examination of the mind which works against paranoia is defeated.*[[259]](#footnote-259)

The economic dynamics of this process of isolation and constriction of critical faculties, also in their turn give rise to reified social relationships, valued transactionally for their marketised exchange value. Alongside this basically Marxist analysis, and exemplifying the methodological eclecticism that typified their approach, Adorno and Horkheimer introduced psychoanalytical categories. The diminished ‘ego-autonomy’ of the individual in their account arises from the incorporation of the middle class and working-class family into processes of capitalist consumption. In this analysis, echoing the concept of ‘parricide’ used by Paul Federn in his study of social revolt in Germany after the First World War,[[260]](#footnote-260) this results in the erosion of the power of the father as a source of introjected social and moral authority. Without the presence of the traditional figure of the father, the super-ego develops in an attenuated form, leaving the individual vulnerable to the appeal of an abstract father-ideal in the form of the Fuhrer or Il Capo. It is this *combining* of Marxist and Freudian elements – as opposed to anything more theoretically *synthesising* - for the purpose of sociological analysis that characterises the work of Adorno and Horkheimer in this period.

**The Freudo-Marxists: Reich; Bernfeld; Fenichel**

As we have seen, Reich was ploughing ground that was theoretically similar to that of Adorno and Horkheimer, though conducted largely independently of them. Throughout the 1920s he had published a series of papers based upon his clinical practice. These works of clinical sexology were laying the foundation stones for his later published ideas regarding the centrality of the orgasm to human happiness and his theory of character formation. Of more direct importance however, is the way in which his psychoanalytical thinking became radicalised by his sharp turn towards communism after 1927.

In his essay *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis,*[[261]](#footnote-261) Reich tackled head-on the question of the compatibility of Marxism and psychoanalysis. In it he argued that psychoanalysis is an emancipating body of thought and that psychological insight is intrinsically opposed to reactionary outlooks. More specifically, his defence of psychoanalysis as an intellectual school that is both compatible with, and has something to offer Marxism, took three approaches: that psychoanalysis is a materialist doctrine; that its object of study, namely the human psyche, is a dialectical phenomenon; and that psychoanalytical insights have significance for the future socialist society. For the first part of Reich’s argument, regarding the materialist status of psychoanalysis, Reich pointed to its empirical findings.[[262]](#footnote-262) Chief amongst Freud’s discoveries for Reich were the libido theory - premised upon the sublimating mechanisms by which primordial sexual instincts are transformed into higher social drives - and, related to this, infantile sexuality and the psycho-social processes of the family that he named the Oedipus complex. Reich argued that the rooting of processes of psychical development and character formation within a social institution, the family, means that since social institutions change historically, so also must the human psyche, now seen as historical and therefore changeable.

*The super-ego of a woman in the age of Plato was fundamentally different from that of a woman in capitalist society: and to the extent that a new society is ideologically foreshadowed within the existing one, the contents of the super-ego naturally change also. This applies to sexual morality, say as much to the ideology of the inviolability of the ownership of the means of production; it also changes of course with the position of the individual in the production process.*[[263]](#footnote-263)

In this essay, Reich does identify idealist tendencies within Freudianism, particularly with respect to Freud’s metapsychology and more particularly still, in relation to the ‘death instinct’. Nonetheless, for Reich, the basing of an understanding of the development and final character of the person, upon biological and social principles made psychoanalysis fundamentally materialist. This moved him into his second defence. The psyche, he argues, is riven with the tensions that are its animus. The inner contradictions involved in the neuroses that originate in the repression of instinctual urges by the ego (under the command of the super-ego) were one example of the kind of dialectical process that Reich had in mind. Another was the tension created by the conflict between the ‘pleasure principle’ (rooted in the unconscious or the ‘id’) and the ‘reality principle’ that governs the ego’s calculations regarding the outside world. Others would include: the intertwining of irrational desires into otherwise outwardly rational forms of social behaviour; the sublimation of basic drives into higher cultural strivings redolent of the transformation of ‘quantity into quality’ that formed one of Engel’s dialectical principles; and the transferability of cathectic energy between outwardly opposing expressions *e.g.* from sexual frustration to ambition. This dialectical character of the psyche Reich argued, could never have been discovered without psychoanalysis.

Reich’s third defence of psychoanalysis was that it is of sociological value. One important example here for Reich was the discovery of the sexual repression in society. Here Reich makes a direct comparison with Marxism:

*Just as Marxism was sociologically the expression of man* becoming conscious *of the laws of economics and the exploitation of a majority by a minority, so psychoanalysis is the expression of man* becoming conscious *of the social repression of sex.*[[264]](#footnote-264)

With the establishment of capitalism, and the increasing incorporation of the proletarian family through co-optive state policy, this sex-repression spreads into working-class life, though never to the same extent as that of the lower middle classes - which is “more Catholic than the Pope”.[[265]](#footnote-265) The sociological importance of psychoanalysis however, lies primarily in its potential applications for rational insight in three areas: research into early human history and the understanding of myth; the theory and practice of mental health therapies premised upon the principle of ‘libido-economy’ and the elimination of neurosis; and in the study of child development and, consequent upon this, for the development of principles of socialist education rooted in a comprehensively rationalist understanding of the needs of the person, from the infant to the early adult stages.[[266]](#footnote-266)

Reich was to integrate these ‘compatibilities’ into many of his studies from this time onwards. In his analysis of fascism in Germany for example he applied his theory of character formation from an early key work, *Character Analysis*[[267]](#footnote-267), premised upon the ‘blocking’ of cathectic energies that congeal into ‘armour’-like rigidities in the behaviour of the person. Combining this theory of character formation with a social analysis of the family under capitalism, Reich described the constraints that acted upon the lower middle-class family: its members struggling to maintain their precarious position ‘above’ the stratum of the industrial working-class, yet out of reach of the social stratum above them. This hemmed-in social position for Reich, characterised by the repression of sexual desire, gave rise to irrational attachments, mystical outlooks and a vulnerability to the seductions of the charismatic leader. In his discussion of authoritarian ideology and commenting on the propaganda techniques used by the Hitler and Goebbels in their rise to power he observed:

*Again and again we run across series such as this: personal honor, family honor, racial honor, national honor. This sequence is consistent with the various layers in the individual structure. However, it fails to include the socio-economic basis: capitalism, or rather patriarchy; the institution of compulsive marriage; sexual repression; personal struggle against one’s own sexuality; personal compensatory feeling of honor; etc. The highest position in the series is assumed by the ideology of “national honor”, which is identical with the irrational core of nationalism.*[[268]](#footnote-268)

The defence of a ‘compatibility thesis’ in the manner formulated by Reich was echoed by his early collaborator, Siegfried Bernfeld.[[269]](#footnote-269) Indeed Bernfeld, whose work on understandings of child development, borrowed directly from Freud’s libido theory as it applied to the infant and combined with specific cultural studies,[[270]](#footnote-270) employed the same three analytical elements. According to Bernfeld, psychoanalysis, in exploring the origins of neurosis and adult character in early experience - its ontogenetic aspect - is historical. It is also, for Bernfeld, materialist: though in a non-reductive and non-mechanical sense. Finally, the antimonies of psychoanalysis – of Eros and Thanatos, of id and super-ego *etc*. - make it dialectical. All of these characteristics together, for Bernfeld as for Reich, meant that Marxist social science and psychoanalysis, were capable of integration with one another.[[271]](#footnote-271) This was a position he was to develop in his pedagogical writings in the 1920s.

In his essay *Sysiphus or the Limits of Education,[[272]](#footnote-272)* Bernfeld deployed Freud’s theoretical formulations, principally the Oedipus complex, for his analysis of the educational system under capitalism. Comparing schooling in his own time with the initiation rites of tribal societies, he argued that the ‘natural pedagogy’ that is the spontaneous development of the infant under its mother’s influence, is insufficient for all human societies - including the most primitive. At an early stage in the young child’s life, it is necessary to break up the ‘mother-child group’ in order to begin acculturation into its society. At this point a dramatic re-ordering of the child’s psychical make-up is instigated. The libidinal attachments to the mother, developed in the first years of life, are now redirected towards elders in tribal societies and the teachers and pedagogical environment of the modern school. The ‘violence’ of this shift from mother-love to the cold processes of social control becomes literal at puberty in many tribal societies, and in some senses also under capitalism.[[273]](#footnote-273) Under capitalism however this process occurs over a decade at least, and is structured less through specific initiation *rites*, than through prolonged formal processes of repression and social prohibition. Society then, for Bernfeld, as well as being structured by economic class, is also *Oedipal*.

Another figure of note in this era is Otto Fenichel. Fenichel developed the compatibility thesis to argue further that the integration of psychoanalysis was actually *necessary* if shortcomings within Marxism were to be overcome. So, whilst Marx had successfully shown that the means of production in any given historical epoch gave rise to forms of consciousness which then reacted back upon the economic ‘base’ of society, he had not been able to discuss how this occurred in detail. For Fenichel, considering the forms and means of the exertion of ruling class power, it was not enough to simply point to the fact that the ruling class controls the education system, religious institutions and the press.

[Marxists’] *unawareness of the details of dynamic interactions can become a great impediment of their cause. Hence, they need to study the details of the influence through school, religion, the press, and the radio. In attempting to arrange a hierarchy of “mills of ideology,” they might discover even more effective mills of this sort such as the family and the suppression of sexuality by society.* [...]. *If man is the product of his material relationships, then he is to be understood in the sense Marx had in mind. Economic circumstances influence the individual directly and indirectly through the detour produced in his changing psychic structure.*[[274]](#footnote-274)

From this ‘integrationist’ position, Fenichel goes on to argue that early life events - organised through ‘mills of ideology’ that alter the psychic structure of the individual - produce what he called ‘unconscious enthusiasms’ underpinning the ‘manifest enthusiasms’ of which the person is aware and that make up their conscious self. These ‘unconscious enthusiasms’ are the result of structured processes that regulate self-esteem, only partially meet the psychical and emotional needs of the child on the condition of approved behaviour and simultaneously operate to frustrate the child’s strivings towards satisfaction. They work to block the outlet of aggressive tendencies and to mould the sublimations of basic drives and conflicts towards resolutions that are socially passive. Importantly also Fenichel repeatedly made the link between the nature of child-rearing and processes of character formation familiar in psychoanalytical discourses, and industry:

*There is a great difference between a nursing mother and an industrial employer; nevertheless the employer makes use of the fact that once there was a nursing mother; because it is the memory of the pleasurable dependence of the infant upon the mother which makes people long for external supplies and ready to believe promises and fulfil conditions.*[[275]](#footnote-275)

**Liberation and the rise of the ‘New Left’**

Reich, Bernfeld and Fenichel were all central to the development of the Freudo-Marxist school in the 1930s. However, the figure that connects the work of the school from that era with the generation following the war, as a seminal influence in the re-emergence of Marxism in the form of the New Left in the west and of Socialist Humanism in Eastern Europe, was Erich Fromm. Beginning with his earliest empirical work that applied Freudian character analysis to the study of political orientations of workers in Weimar Germany[[276]](#footnote-276) Fromm was concerned with the problem of conformity and worker passivity in the face of the Nazi’s rise to power in Germany. In *The Fear of Freedom,*[[277]](#footnote-277) a book that was to achieve large publics on both sides of the Atlantic, he posed the question of freedom as a ‘psychological problem’. Tracing the phenomenon of the ‘individual’ historically both as a political entity and as a felt experience, he identified what he termed a lag between the emergence of individuation and the development of the self. Socially atomising economic and political forces, Fromm argued, marched ahead of the inward ability of the personal psyche to cope with the degrees of isolation it encountered. More often than not, in Fromm’s analysis, this resulted in psychical strategies of denial and flight from reality.

*While the process of individuation takes place automatically, the growth of the self is hampered for a number of individual and social reasons. The lag between these two trends results in an unbearable feeling of isolation and powerlessness, and this in its turn leads to psychic mechanisms, which are later on* [in Fromm’s text] *described as* mechanisms of escape*.*[[278]](#footnote-278)

Fromm suggested three such ‘mechanisms of escape’. The first was ‘authoritarianism’. Here, the individual, in abandoning their own autonomy and in fear of social ostracism,[[279]](#footnote-279) seeks salvation in the forming of ‘secondary bonds’ with a force, whether it be that of a person or a social or material object, outside of themselves. Borrowing from Freud, Fromm identified both masochistic *and* sadistic personality tendencies as the outward manifestations of this form of escape. The second form of escape Fromm termed ‘destructiveness’. Destructiveness, for Fromm was distinct from sadism. Whereas sadism represented the desire to dominate and incorporate the ‘other’, destructiveness represented the desire to *eliminate* the external object, whether human or inert. Still, like sadism it was also a reflex response to the sense of isolation and powerlessness in the world. The third of Fromm’s ‘escapes’ was that of ‘automaton conformity’. Here, the person labours under the delusion of their individuality. The suppression of any critical self-knowledge early in life produces a disconnection with any actual or potential inner self. The result is that the person borrows thoughts, opinions and even feelings from sources and influences outside of themselves in ways that make them susceptible to conforming behaviours, even where these are clearly harmful to their own rational interests.[[280]](#footnote-280) These ‘escapes’ formed the basis of Fromm’s theory of social character.

As Fromm developed his social theory between the wars he was to move by steps away from Freudian orthodoxies, resulting in conflict with the leading figures of the Frankfurt School.[[281]](#footnote-281) Fromm’s major theoretical breaking point concerned Freud’s libido theory and, at a more general level, his theory of instincts. Whereas the other principal names of the Frankfurt School adhered to Freudian orthodoxy on the question of the sex-drive and its repression and sublimations as providing *the* key to understanding culture, Fromm increasingly came to see it as one – albeit important - factor amongst a range of others. Departing from the ‘biological materialism’ upon which figures such as Adorno and Horkheimer built their critique of capitalist society,[[282]](#footnote-282) Fromm insisted upon an analytical framework within which the biological drives did not simply exist as a socially repressed substratum to human behaviour, but rather interacted with other factors such as interpersonal relations and the individual’s conscious ‘relationship to the world’. Fromm was to summarise his modification of Freud’s libido theory in the following way:

*At this point we can restate the most important differences between the psychological approach pursued in this book and that of Freud … we look upon human nature as essentially historically conditioned, although we do not minimize the significance of biological factors and do not believe that the question can be put correctly in terms of cultural versus biological factors. In second place, Freud’s essential principle is to look upon man as an entity, a closed system, endowed by nature with certain physiologically conditioned drives, and to interpret the development of his character as a reaction to satisfactions and frustrations of these drives; whereas, in our opinion, the fundamental approach to human personality is the understanding of man’s relation to the world, to others, to nature, and to himself. We believe that man is* primarily *a social being, and not, as Freud assumes, primarily self-sufficient and only secondarily in need of others in order to satisfy his instinctual needs … Therefore, in our approach, the needs and desires that centre about the individual’s relations to others, such as love, hatred, tenderness, symbiosis, are the fundamental psychological phenomena, while with Freud they are only secondary results from frustrations or satisfactions of instinctive needs.*[[283]](#footnote-283)

Other leading figures in the field of Freudo-Marxism were to sharply attack the position that Fromm laid out here.[[284]](#footnote-284) To his opponents, Fromm’s reformulations of Freud’s key concepts represented a step away from the dispassionate rigour of the Freudian paradigm, and a drift into vague humanism and diffuse commentaries upon the human condition. Indeed, it is true that much of Fromm’s later writing conforms to this type. Books such as *Man for Himself*[[285]](#footnote-285), *The Art of Loving,*[[286]](#footnote-286) *The* *Essence of Man,*[[287]](#footnote-287) and *To Have or to Be*[[288]](#footnote-288) addressed largely ethical, humanistic and existentialist concerns. However, it is also true that Fromm remained a passionate defender of Marxism,[[289]](#footnote-289) always regarding Marx as the intellectually greater and more historically significant figure when compared to Freud who “did not transcend the principles of bourgeois society”.[[290]](#footnote-290) Living in Mexico between 1950 and 1973, along with figures such as Marie Langer he would go on to establish a tradition of Latin American Marxist psychoanalysis.

Fromm’s writings were to connect with a mood of intellectual and social revolt that germinated in the west throughout the 1950s and exploded over the following decade. For those seeking lives and a world built upon principles of rationality, personal and sexual fulfilment and peace, Fromm assumed the status of a *zeitgeist* figure: even for some a ‘prophet of the age’. More importantly, he was also a bridge for Marxist and socially radical critique from the generation of revolutionaries of the 1920s and 1930s to that of the 1960s.

The other great transitional figure, whose philosophical and political influence - and activism - spanned the decades before and following the Second World War, was Herbert Marcuse. In 1955 Marcuse published *Eros and Civilization*.[[291]](#footnote-291) At the heart of the book lay a re-working of Freud’s theory of the libido. Freud had argued that the unconscious pleasure-seeking impulses and drives (including the sex-drive) that characterise the id, caused the conscious self, the ego, to collide painfully with ‘reality’. The behaviour and social orientations of the self were modified through the intercession of the super-ego that began to develop in the person’s eighth or ninth year. The super-ego, in Freud’s psychical architecture, exerted a repressive force against the id in order to curb its potentially destructive tendencies. The force of the id then, its cathectic energy, frustrated in its full expression, became channelled or *sublimated* into other, less potentially harmful ends. The outcome was forms of socially acceptable behaviour that allowed the person to navigate their way in the world, to work and to maintain outwardly successful familial relationships. The culture of any given society was the result of these conflicting forces: repression (and accompanying neuroses) the price paid for the stability it afforded.

Freud’s prognosis for humanity was gloomy. The root of neuroses and the various types of psychological disturbance that were all too apparent in the society of Freud’s time as they are in our own, lay in un-reconciled conflicts between competing psychical structures. Most notably, unresolved struggles within the person’s own Oedipal Complex could cause deep-seated problems for their ability to form stable relationships, find sexual fulfilment and ultimately achieve personal happiness. Psychoanalysis could intervene to aid the individual in identifying the unresolved complexes that troubled them, bringing into consciousness conflicts that may have lain beneath the surface of their self-awareness for years and decades. The result however, even with the most successful interventions, could never be more than a normative adjustment to the *limits* of personal fulfilment. The individual’s happiness and especially their sexual happiness, lay in the acceptance of the inevitability of the repression of their deepest desires; in other words, in the acceptance of disappointment.

In a radical re-working of libido theory that would be later taken up within the counter-culture of the 1960s and by the gay-liberation movement in the 1970s, Marcuse identified its ‘explosive’ kernel, trapped within the social conservatism and philosophical pessimism of its Freudian framing. This explosive potential was described by Marcuse as a ‘hidden trend’ within psychoanalysis, of repressed memory within the individual and their wider culture. In the process of individual psychoanalytical work forgotten memories, brought once more to the surface of the person’s consciousness, brought with them truths too difficult to manage in the course of a conventional life. With them also came ‘critical standards’ by which the person could assess their inward states and public self.

*The psychoanalytic liberation of memory explodes the rationality of the repressed individual. As cognition gives way to re-cognition, the forbidden images and impulses of childhood begin to tell the truth that reason denies. Regression assumes a progressive function.[[292]](#footnote-292)*

The challenge as Marcuse saw it was to liberate this revolutionary content: this he set out to do through a *historicising* of Freud’s theory.

Freud had posited a ‘reality principle’ that blocked and frustrated the ‘pleasure principle’, continuously forcing it back into the unconscious and semi-conscious parts of the person’s psyche. Marcuse saw in the reality principle an undifferentiated construct that floated above history, constituted as the universal resistance to the deepest strivings of the unconscious self. Of all the elements of Freud’s theoretical edifice however, the reality principle appeared to be the one that most obviously begged for historical contextualisation. In Marcuse’s treatment the reality principle, re-constituted now in terms of the structures and material culture of any given society, was something that the individual had to master in their real and particular social life, and against which they had to *perform*. So, the reality principle, for Marcuse, was also a ‘performance principle’ that arose concretely and differently from and for each material-historical epoch.

This historical reframing of Freud’s libido theory, particularly considering its cultural aspects (its phylogeny), would make little difference to the outward result of the competing physical forces in Freud’s model for the greater part of human history. Throughout the millennia human-kind had lived in circumstances of absolute scarcity (*Ananke*) that had made psychological repression and often brutality a social necessity. Repression had for most of human history been the *necessary* price paid for civilisation. Moreover, it was only with the repression of the libido and the re-channelling of its energies into *work* that human society and its cultures had progressed at all. [[293]](#footnote-293) With the rise of capitalism however, and especially of the form that was flourishing in the US society that Marcuse observed, this had changed. In affluent consumerist society the repression that was exerted by the super-ego upon the strivings of the id, whilst crucial for the maintenance of the social order and its systems, was no longer justifiable in terms of existential necessity; it was no longer a matter of *survival*. This ‘problem’ was captured by Marcuse *via* a modification of the concept of ‘repression’ itself. The normal repression that arose from needs created by scarcity was now accompanied by a ‘surplus repression’ that was imposed by social constraints and required of the individual that they accept its results for their lives: repression in affluent society must function as a *self*-repression. Furthermore, Marcuse argued that the degree of the surplus-repression required for the stability of any society provides a measure of how repressive to conscious behaviour it is overall.

*Within the total structure of the repressed personality, surplus repression is that portion which is the result of specific societal conditions sustained in the specific interest of domination. The extent of this surplus-repression provides the standard of measurement: the smaller it is, the less repressive the stage of civilization.*[[294]](#footnote-294)

For Freud the striving for libidinal pleasure that emanated from with the id, repressed by the super-ego, became sublimated into social moralities and value systems; this repressive sublimation being the root of (and the price paid for) culture. For Marcuse surplus repression provided a means by which consumerism was perpetuated as a mode of social behaviour.

In Marcuse’s modification of Freud’s libido theory as he developed it a decade later in *One Dimensional Man* surplus repression, rather than being sublimated into higher order motivations, becomes *de*-sublimated into myriad libidinal appetites to be met by the consumer products of everyday life and commoditised entertainment and distraction. The partial release of the id in conservative forms that works *for* ‘the *status quo* of general repression’, regulated through processes of ‘*institutionalized desublimation’* provides the psycho-social material that fuels capitalist consumption.[[295]](#footnote-295) According to Marcuse, in modern consumerist society the pleasure principle absorbs the reality principle.[[296]](#footnote-296) In no other area of life was this more obviously evidenced than the sexual. In a style that anticipates Foucault’s observations upon the ubiquity of sex and its coincidence with continuing repression,[[297]](#footnote-297) Marcuse describes the joyless and non-erotic nature of the uses of sexual imagery so familiar in consumer culture.

By emending the key elements of Freud’s theoretical architecture Marcuse was presenting a new picture of the workings of the psyche; an altered understanding of its mechanics and animus in consumer behaviour. The full significance of this however only becomes apparent when, with Marcuse, we consider its implications for Eros. As we have seen, for Freud Eros (the life-instinct) remained forever trapped under the socially necessary control of the super-ego. Desire could never be satisfied: the human being never fulfilled. The impossibility of human happiness beyond the most borderline and compromised forms, equated for Marcuse with the impossibility of human liberation and as a corollary the futility of belief in the communist society. It was this anthropological ontology that Marcuse had set out to critique and overthrow in his historicising of Freud.

We have already seen the way in which Marcuse reconstructed Freud’s universal ‘reality principle’ into the historically concrete *performance* principle. In a society structured by repressive systems of social control and sexual regulation, Eros itself could be expressed in only the most constrained and distorted forms. In a free society this would not be the case. Given free-reign in a non-repressive society the pleasure-seeking instinct would find creative rather than destructive outlets. As a consequence, the libido could become free without ensuing chaos. But more than this, Eros would be freed of the repressively sexualised forms that dominate in capitalist consumer culture. The ‘erotic’, understood as life-enhancing human activity as opposed to exclusively sexual behaviour, would now permeate all areas of life.[[298]](#footnote-298) The rigidifying distinctions between labour and leisure, the aesthetic and the non-aesthetic, the quotidian and the profound *etc.* would no longer apply. In this Marcusian sense, work itself would become *erotic*. As he was to put in his 1969 *An Essay on Liberation*:

*Freud's last theoretical conception recognizes the erotic instincts as work instincts – work for the creation of a sensuous environment. The social expression of the liberated work instinct is cooperation, which, grounded in solidarity, directs the organization of the realm of necessity and the development of the realm of freedom*.[[299]](#footnote-299)

For Marcuse, the liberated person, developing their creative potential and flourishing through personally fulfilling social relationships, was both the *sine qua non* and justification of the free society. In *Eros and Civilization*, against Freud’s Oedipal pessimism, communism was restored as both an ethical ideal *and* as a concrete human possibility.[[300]](#footnote-300)

**Lacan and the French ‘****turn to Freud’**

If Marcuse can be seen as the intellectual bridge - both in historical time and geographical space – that produced the peculiarly Anglo-American river of radical Left psychoanalysis after the war, his equivalent on the European Continent was Jaques Lacan. Lacan’s influence on all aspects of the human and social sciences is vast: too vast to list in detail in the short space available here. Suffice to say that Lacan created a ‘Francophone river’ of critical psychoanalytical theory. Here only the main concepts that moved his thought, and that influenced movements ‘of the Left’ will be discussed.

Lacan’s first important contribution to psychoanalytical thought was his ‘mirror stage’ of infant development that he presented at the 1949 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Zurich.[[301]](#footnote-301) The mirror stage drew upon the empirical work of the French psychologist Henri Wallon who in his ‘mirror test’ had observed the obsessive interest of the infant with their own reflected image between the ages of six to eighteen months. The concept also echoed the ‘looking glass self’ that was a core theoretical category in the work of the American sociologist Charles Cooley, and for the school of symbolic interactionism with which he was associated.[[302]](#footnote-302) For Cooley, the ‘reflected-self’ (understood both in literally visual terms *and* as a cultural metaphor) provided the means by which the expectations of ‘the other’, for example the mother, entered into the formative processes responsible for the emergence of self-hood. However, whereas for the symbolic interactionists, the continuous modifications of social behaviour demanded by the literal, social and cultural reflections of the self still presumed a stable and enduring ‘I’, for Lacan it did not.[[303]](#footnote-303) In terms that took his theoretical framing of the mirror stage beyond clinical observation, he posited instead a fractured and unstable self, continuously threatened with annihilation. In his introduction to his 1949 paper, alluding to his psychoanalytical practice, he highlighted the philosophical consequence of this methodological starting point:

*It should be noted that this experience sets us at odds with any philosophy directly stemming from the* cogito*.*[[304]](#footnote-304)

The mirror stage for Lacan represents a moment of primary structuration, a ‘rootstock’ of all subsequent structuration including crucially, that of gender. The steps in his formulation, as well as how they align with other aspects of his *oeuvre*, need to be understood in order to appreciate how this can be so.

In Lacan’s mirror stage, the infant from about six months onwards sees in their reflected image a unary being, and so comes to experience themselves now not as a disassociated set of fluid sensations, but rather as an integrated whole. In the same moment they see in the emerging motor control that is evidenced for them in their own reflected image, the means by which to overcome the distress of their hitherto entirely helpless condition. Whilst this ontogenically formative stage is a moment of self-recognition - a primary narcissism that precedes society - it is also overwritten by myriad social symbols that constitute the external social world. The infant does not recognise itself in an unmediated fashion. Rather a host of ‘others’ are on hand to welcome the moment with encouraging prompts and social cues. The event is *over-determined* by the socio-linguistic context of the infant’s family, community and cultural landscape. This context provides a force-field of powerful signifiers that cut into the emerging mentalities of the child and become buried deeply in its socio-cognitive processes. The result is an ego that sits, cuckoo-like, in the psyche of the individual. This notion of the ego as a virtual entity, an extimate (as opposed to an intimate) interloper, falsely presenting itself to consciousness as an authentic self, is for Lacan also the root of a constitutive alienation that haunts the person throughout their life. This primary alienation in turn produces a ceaseless and never-fulfilled striving for mastery and realisation through the creation of alter-egos and emendations to the self’s portrayal *of* itself *to* itself.

In the early development of the person then, what they perceive as their autonomous self - their ego - is in fact an introjected entity created by ‘Others’ who organise their physical, social and psychological environment. What they take to be ‘social reality’, and including their notions of self-hood, is in fact, to use Lacan’s phrasing, an ‘Imaginary’. In other words, it is a ‘veil of appearance’ that occludes direct perception of the world and therefore the person’s capacity for rational apprehension of things as they really are. This Imaginary, however, cannot operate alone in a pure state of simple delusions. Its development is encrypted by the active involvement of the ‘Symbolic’: the matrix of signifiers that constitute the socio-symbolic order into which they have been born.[[305]](#footnote-305) It is the combination of the Imaginary and the Symbolic that produces the social reality of lived experience with all its variegated richness and falsehood. Finally, there is Lacan’s ‘Real’. This is not the ‘social reality’ just described. Indeed, the Real in Lacan’s theoretical framework has a mystery about it. It is that which cannot be captured by the Imaginary or by the Symbolic. It eludes both and in-so-doing remains continually ‘beyond’ what the person can know. The opacity of the Real makes of it an enigmatic ‘thing-in-itself’ that is known by its effects, but never by its cognitively apprehended presence. This tripartite scheme of Imaginary, Symbolic and Real is Lacan’s ‘Register Theory’; and his concerns with each of the three Registers at different points in his life provide the organising spine to an understanding of his intellectual trajectory over his active career.

Of particular interest here for our larger theme of the political dimensions of psychoanalysis, is Lacan’s understanding of the unconscious and its implications for interpretations of ideology produced by later thinkers he influenced. Here the Symbolic register is key. For Lacan, the unconscious is not a dark churn of irrationalist impulse and unchained desire (*qua* Freud), but rather is a complicated and highly enmeshed socio-linguistic lattice: the unconscious for Lacan, is ‘structured like a language’.

*Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him “by bone and flesh” before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it – unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death.[[306]](#footnote-306)*

It is the Symbolic then that structures, or ‘writes’, the unconscious. In the French Lacan says ‘L'inconscient est structuré *comme un langage*". His choice of terms is precise in that ‘comme’ translates into the English as ‘like’ rather than ‘by’; and ‘langage’ (as in *de* Saussure’s original distinction) translates as language *per se* (or, as Lacan emphasises, ‘letters’) rather than any one spoken language.[[307]](#footnote-307) The Symbolic, drawn as it is from the world of social signifiers, is the creation of the ‘others’ that populate the developmental environment of the infant and growing child. The unconscious that results is trans-subjective in character, criss-crossed by a multitude of conflicting and paradoxical social influences. Significantly, this means that along with being linguistically structured the Lacanian unconscious is also non-biological (again, unlike Freud) and is the result of the work of the Symbolic upon the human subject. Finally, the Symbolic register, animated as it is by the dynamic structures of language, provides the spaces – the gaps created by the shifting alignments of signifier and signified – through and between which the unconscious slides.[[308]](#footnote-308)

Lacan’s Register Theory is central to his re-working of Freud’s Oedipus complex. For Lacan persons outside of the individual’s own psyche come in three types each corresponding to one of the Registers. He distinguishes the first – that of the Imaginary Register – with a lower case ‘o’. The Imaginary ‘other’ is the other of normal daily interactions. It is the other to whom we broadly attribute the same ‘qualities-of-self’ as ourselves. It is our assumptions about the nature of the others with whom we interact that enable us to move competently within and through our social world. Over against these others there is the Symbolic *O*ther. This is the Other that resembles Freud’s super-ego. It brings with it the entire socio-linguistic world of norms, expectations and morality. It most nearly approximates to the parent-carer in the early years of the infant’s life. However, it is more than the parent: it is the bearer of authority and the guardian of the ‘rules-of-behaviour’ that will govern the person’s life. Finally, there is the Real Other. The enigmatic nature of the Real has already been noted. But now we see this played out in the forms of the Mother and the Father. To the infant, the figure of the Mother (or the fixed socio-cultural presence that the Mother-figure represents), emanating from the unfathomable darkness of the Real, is a source of anxiety. She is the source of life, sustenance and comfort: in that sense she is the entire world. But by her presence she is overwhelming - whilst if she is absent she creates terror. In the psyche of the infant there is the constant and urgent question: ‘what does the Mother *want*?’ The Mother in Lacan’s cosmology is always ‘too much or too little’. In its distress the small child turns to the Father seeking a countervailing force to their dominating power. In the child’s growing mind, the Father (or the fixed socio-cultural presence that the Father-figure represents: a *symbolic* Phallus, representing all that the Mother does not have) is the means by which the demands of the Mother can be met, controlled, negotiated or even blocked. To the child, the Father is protector.

Finally, it is this dance of cultural signifiers that structures the libidinal energies and hedonic patterns of the psyche of the person. Each of us has a biological substratum, an ontic body that has needs that must be met to survive. This is manifested as *demand* that goes further than what is physically required to meet this need.[[309]](#footnote-309) The surplus that is left is for Lacan, desire. So, in a mathematically-styled expression of desire being the remainder of demand minus need, Lacan brings us to his reworking of Freud’s libido theory.

*What is thus alienated in needs constitutes an Urverdrängung* [primal repression], *as it cannot, hypothetically, be articulated in demand; it nevertheless appears in an offshoot that presents itself in man as desire (das Begehren).*[[310]](#footnote-310)

This ‘desire’ must be understood in its peculiarly Lacanian inflexion. The desire is for an object, naturally. In the child however, the ‘object’ in question is that of the *Mother’s* desire: the phallus (as the *representation* of that which she does not have). This is the Lacanian *object petit a*.[[311]](#footnote-311) So, the desire of the child is to *be* the phallus: the object of the Mother’s desire. In Lacan’s cosmology, beneath our desires are the desires of the *other*: or more prosaically, we might say the wish to *be* the object that is cherished by another.

For Freud, the pleasure principle had been one of the two primary psychical impulses (the other being the reality principle). For Lacan it was rather the perpetually frustrated desires of the subject, always and forever circling their intended objects without ultimate satisfaction. This was the source of what he called *jouissance*: the restless energy that results from the constant failure of subjective gratification. This *jouissance* was the *suffering* constitutive of the human condition.

## Oppression, revolt and the remains of a theory

**Psychoanalysis and oppression: of the colonised; of the women; of the worker**

The influence of the Left Freudian tradition was pervasive throughout the western counter-cultures of the 1960s and 1970s. In broad terms we have seen how this influence flowed in two tributaries: that of the Anglophone Marcusian school; and that of the Francophone Lacanians. However, it is the directly political aspects of this legacy that are of most concern here. Various intellectual traditions within social and liberation movements were influenced by politico-psychological theorising of one type or another during the post-war era. To take three examples: firstly, the influence of Left psychoanalysis within anti-colonial struggles; secondly, its role in western feminism; and thirdly theoretical developments within western Marxism. For the first we will consider the thinking of Franz Fanon; for the second, that of Juliet Mitchell; and for the third the work of Louis Althusser.

*Franz Fanon*

Before embarking upon any critical appraisal of the thought of Franz Fanon, charting the heterogeneous admixtures of his political philosophy, it is important to acknowledge the extent of his influence. The readership of his last published 1961 work, *The Wretched of the Earth*[[312]](#footnote-312), throughout the colonised world and within anti-colonial, national liberation and minority anti-oppression movements was and remains enormous. There have been many armed insurgencies particularly, in which Fanon’s great key work has been cited by leaders and activists as having been an important intellectual reference in their political trajectory towards a revolutionist stance. In the jails of apartheid South Africa, the H-Blocks of the Maze Prison in Long Kesh, Northern Ireland and the internment camps of the state of Israel, *The Wretched of the Earth* has circulated as an educational text.[[313]](#footnote-313) Figures of the stature of Malcolm X in North America, Che Geuvara in Cuba and Steve Biko in South Africa were affected by Fanon’s call for cultural renewal and the overcoming of colonial psychologies. A later readership of his earlier published book, *Black Skin, White Masks*[[314]](#footnote-314)grew out of the interest in Fanon that this influence had created. Across these two seminal works we can trace the quite eclectic philosophical and conceptual layers of his political outlook and activism. More specifically, through them we can see the degrees to which Marxism and psychoanalysis in differing and sometimes unorthodox ways shaped his analysis of the colonial psyche and the struggle for mental, bodily and political liberation.[[315]](#footnote-315)

The development of Fanon’s philosophical outlook can be mapped by his geographical journey from the Antilles to France and finally to Algeria. Absorbing and critically assessing the diverse influences of négritude, French phenomenology, existentialism, Marxism, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, Fanon’s thought comprises a patchwork of insights drawn from this range of traditions. It is the influences of Marxism and psychoanalysis however, that is of interest here.

The political character of Fanon’s Marxism is most evident in *The Wretched of the Earth*. This is where we see his analysis of the intrinsic and constitutive role of violence in the position of the colonised and the struggle for liberation. It is there that he warns of the dangers of co-option of the nationalist bourgeois by the colonial powers. It is there also that he provides his assessment of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and his scepticism of the potential of the industrial working-class of the Third World.

*… it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization are simply a question of relative strength*.[[316]](#footnote-316)

In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon stresses spontaneity against the control of indigenous elites and importance of cultural nationalism; and shades of psychoanalysis are present throughout. Fanon’s discussion of violence and cultural renewal for example employs the metaphors of libido, cathexis, discharge and orgiastic release.

*The native's relaxation* [in dance] *takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed, and conjured away... There are no limits -- for in reality your purpose in coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption.*[[317]](#footnote-317)

In the final essay of the collection ‘Colonial War and Mental Disorders’, Fanon speaks directly as a psychiatrist; but still with a political purpose. In this discussion, he draws upon his experience as a doctor with the *Front de Libération Nationale* (F.L.N.) in the Algerian War of Independence. From his case notes he identifies four types – or ‘series’ – of psychiatric disorders. These were: ‘reactionary’ cases in which the disorder arises directly from the experience, whether as perpetrator or victim, of the violent ‘event’; cases in which the disorder arises from the atmosphere of violent conflict – of total war - more generally; affective-intellectual ‘modifications’ and morbidities that had resulted from torture; and psycho-somatic illnesses and cortico-visceral disorders that are associated with war. In all of these case-types Fanon treats the associated symptoms, not as the result of personal idiopathies or family histories (*qua* Freud) but rather as the result of environment. For Fanon the psychiatrist, disturbances of the mind arise directly from the injuries visited upon the psyche in the real violence of war.

*The Wretched of the Earth* can in many ways be seen as Fanon’s final political manifesto to the world: his cry to the ‘wretched’ to rise. It is in his earlier work however, that his more philosophical and psychoanalytical influences are most evident. The great theme of *Black Skin, White Masks* is the dense and violent dialectic of race that runs through the European Enlightenment. In his discussion of the recognitions, mis-recognitions and non-recognitions that constitute the antagonisms of race, he demonstrates and explicitly acknowledges the influence of Hegel’s master-slave relationship. For Fanon, the white colonist creates the ‘Negro’. Fanon rejected the thesis put forward by the ethnologist Octave Mannoni[[318]](#footnote-318) that, by virtue of psychology and culture, there can be such thing as a colonised ‘type’. Fanon argued that it was the synchronic collision of the European and the non-European in the creation of empires that lies at the root of oppression.

*I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and the black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex. I hope by analysing it to destroy it.* [[319]](#footnote-319)

For Fanon, the entire architecture of colonial relations, behaviours, tropes of speech and communication, modes of postural deference and social deferment become a ‘psychological-economic system’.[[320]](#footnote-320)

Considering the influence of psychoanalysis, it is actually the *ambivalence* of Fanon’s of its use that is interesting. He rejects for example the ego-psychology of Alfred Adler out of court. Linking Adler’s ‘goal-oriented’ psychoanalysis with Monnoni’s belief in a ‘dependency-complex’ by which a colonised people in some pre-determinist fashion, accept their fate, he argues instead that it is environment and society that give rise to passivity.[[321]](#footnote-321) Moreover, citing Malinowski’s studies of the Trobriand people of Papua New Guinea,[[322]](#footnote-322) he argues that Freud’s Oedipus complex is not found amongst the matriarchal family structure of much of the colonised world. Even repression, so central to psychoanalysis, he argues finds no place in the psyche of the negro:

*Since the racial drama is played out in the open, the black man has no time to* “*make it unconscious*” [[323]](#footnote-323)

If this was all that Fanon had to say on the subject, we could conclude that he had rejected psychoanalysis in its entirety and exclude him from this discussion. However, with respect to the ‘white race’, Fanon remained a Freudian. Indeed, the deep-seated sexual repression Fanon saw in the interaction between colonised and coloniser for him demanded a psychoanalytical interpretation.

*Every intellectual gain requires a loss of sexual potential. The civilised white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepressed incest. In one way these fantasies respond to Freud’s life instinct. Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves “as if” the Negro really had them …* [[324]](#footnote-324)

Furthermore, the use that Fanon made of Lacan’s conceptual innovations in psychological theory means that we cannot dismiss the psychoanalytical vein in his thought. In an extended footnote[[325]](#footnote-325) Fanon discusses the relevance of Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’ of child development. As we have seen, according to Lacan at around six months the infant develops the singular self-realisation that results from seeing itself in the Other: the Other that is ‘not itself’. In this moment of self-awareness, the multiple and dynamic layers of recognition and misrecognition that drive the processes of socialisation commence. In the context of the coloniser-colonised nexus the *imago* of the Other was infused with an “imaginary aggression”. Fear of the ‘non-white’ then, churned through developmental processes of the ‘colonial infant’ as described by Lacan, ensures that the colonial native enters the imagination of the child as the presence of danger: the negro, in bodily form, is seen as forever a threat. In Fanon’s formulation we can still detect the distant influence of Freud, albeit in a complicated, selective and Lacanian form.

*Juliet Mitchell*

For much of the post-Second World War period the feminist consensus surrounding Freud was that he represented nothing less than the ‘rationalisation in theory’ of the submission of woman from the origins of humanity. Across Freud’s extensive publications and private correspondences there are quotes aplenty that can be used to present Freud in this light. His focus upon the sexual development of the boy (the ‘masculine model’) in his early work and terms such as ‘penis-envy’ and ‘hysteria’ used to describe normalising gendering processes and female neuroses, particularly did nothing to help Freud’s reputation.

One figure who emerged from the New Left of the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s and who stood out from this consensus was Juliet Mitchell. Mitchell was critical both of Marxism on the question of women, and of the forerunners and contemporaries of the Women’s Liberation Movement itself. She highlighted what she considered to be the eclipsing of ‘the woman’ as a real subject within both the philosophical humanism of the early Marx; and the category of ‘the family’ in its economic function in the later Marx and in the work of Engels.[[326]](#footnote-326) However, even amongst her fellow socialist feminists she detected the same tendency towards economistic analyses of women’s oppression: by adopting an ‘evolutionary economism’ that anchored the position of ‘the woman’ in property relations throughout history in the case of Simone *de* Beauvoir; and by treating ‘patriarchy’ as itself a mode of production by Kate Millett.[[327]](#footnote-327) However it is the matter of psychoanalysis with which we are most concerned and about which Mitchell had much to say for us to think about here.

In her critical sweep of some of the most important names within the women’s movement Mitchell found that overlooking the scientific content of Freud’s thinking was a consistent feature of their dismissals. Betty Friedan for instance in *The Feminine Mystique*, whilst she acknowledged Freud’s radicalism in shedding light on the importance of sexuality in the development and life of the person whether female or male, nonetheless emphasised the prejudices and offending foibles in his work that can only jar against modern sensibilities surrounding the position of women in society. This raising of what we might call the ‘biography of Freud’ over any more scientific critique of his thought results in a historicism that renders Freud only a product of his times, and so easy to dismiss on political grounds. Commenting on other accounts of Freud by significant feminist thinkers, Mitchell noted dominant theoretical mistreatments such as the tendency to displace the primacy of sex by losing it in diffuse constructs such as a generalised ‘life-energy’ (in the case of Shulamith Firestone)[[328]](#footnote-328) or in socio-existential categories (in the case of Simone *de* Beauvoir).[[329]](#footnote-329)

In iconoclastic style Mitchell was to break with the feminist conventions regarding Freud. In doing so she was acting in the spirit of Lacan’s call to ‘return to Freud’ on the matter of sexual difference and its centrality to the structuring of the subject. She did so by adopting an explicitly Lacanian approach to the question of how ‘maleness’ and ‘femaleness’ occur. The question at hand for Mitchell (and for Lacan before her) was this: are we *born* male or female, or do we *become* so? Beyond the given anatomical differences between boys and girls then, Mitchell and Lacan (and Freud before them) were concerned with sexual difference in its behavioural sense. Why is it that humans *couple* in the way they do? What is working at the root of sexual attraction? What explains the social and personal *consequences* of our anatomical differences? Beyond the cultural variation of human sexuality, how do we explain its universality. So, are our sexual differences, looked at in the general sense, essentially biological and innate, or are they cultural and therefore changeable? For Mitchell the answer was that sexual difference was the result of a ‘becoming’ after birth. We can trace the logic of this position through Mitchell’s discussion of Freud’s 1925 essay, *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes.*[[330]](#footnote-330)

In 1905 in the *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* Freud had published in full-form his theory of the Oedipus complex. Focused exclusively on the attachments and frustrated jealousies of the boy child, Freud had established a ‘male model’ of sexual development. With regard to the sexual development of the girl child however the Oedipus complex had little to say that was distinctive of later female sexuality. At this point Freud, resorted to a type of parallelism by which, whilst the boy fought the father for the mother’s affections (later transferring these energies to womankind) the girl merely mirrored this dynamic and so ‘therefore’ came to form an attachment with the father (and so later an attraction to the phallus). Freud was aware of the theoretical gap that this created in his account of human sexuality, revolving around the simple question of ‘Why?’: Why should it be that the girl, suffering the same disruptive intrusions by the father, should go on to form such an attachment with the father and not, just as in the case of the boy, their mother? It was a problem that Freud struggled with for the next twenty years through a series of disputes within the psychoanalytical community.

Some of Freud’s followers in the International Psychoanalytical Institute tried to solve the riddle in different ways. Working under the theoretical influence of Melanie Klein and led by Ernest Jones, a number of notable figures within the movement began to question the fundamentals of Freud’s account of feminine sexuality based upon his ‘dynamic’ theory of mind and a general ‘drive-theory’, and specifically the status of the Castration Complex. Focussing upon the pre-Oedipal months of the infant’s development, Klein had elaborated instead an ‘object-relations’ theory of psychical development in the small child. In the first months of life the object of comfort and sustenance was the mother’s breast. The loss of this ‘part-object’ (‘part’ that is of the mother) during short periods of separation created a psychical trace of the breast as a ‘phantasy’, marking the beginning of the sexual unconscious. With the periodic return of the mother, the infant increasingly understands the breast to be a part of something larger: the mother herself, seen eventually as the ‘total-object’ by the infant. In this first phase of life the process for the girl-child and the boy-child are the same. Increasingly aware of the social dynamics of the familial relations in which it is enmeshed, and of the gendered differences of those dynamics, the child strives to maintain its access to the nurturing mother. The strategems eventually adopted by boys and by girls are different however in this ‘already gendered’ family world. This, for Klein and for the predominantly British object-relations school, was the basis of sexual identity in later stages of child development.

Another position in the controversy was that held by Karl Abrahams who put forward the concept of ‘vaginal receptivity’ by which, during the girl’s sexual development and by stages, a desire for the phallus (and for a baby as a phallic proxy), occurs as a natural development universally in all human cultures. Freud was to rail doggedly against this notion. His main concern was that such an account was essentially biologistic. If it was indeed the case, as Abrahams argued, that psychological structures were the result of undifferentiated bodily impulses then an original femininity (and by implication an original masculinity) was established that determined the destiny of the person at birth. Moreover, this created also a ‘normality’ that made any complications such as homosexuality, the result of a *mal*-development. For Freud sexual difference lay in its own theoretically obscure realm between the biological-anatomical substratum and social influences: the human psyche. He was determined to keep biology at the margins of the story.

Other prominent figures such as Jung with his ‘Electra Complex’ (a mirror of the Oedipus complex) and rival biological accounts such as that of Fleiss, suffered similar rebuttals by Freud; and to the consternation of many of the leading figures of psychoanalysis.

Over these decades of intense controversy, Freud came to the view that the sexual development of the girl was *asymmetric* to that of the boy. Rejecting any homology by which anatomy directly determined sexual difference, Freud had arrived by 1924 at a revision of the Oedipus complex that radically altered its dynamic. This shift occurred through the mobilisation of a hitherto minor element in the earlier theory that was now to assume centre stage: the Castration Complex.

In his original theory the boy becomes aware at a very young age of the penis as the mark of sexual difference between his mother and father, and between himself and his mother and sisters. Pained also by the dominance of his father for his mother’s affections, the boy develops an anxiety at the realisation that the penis is something that need not exist and so, in his infantile imagination, something also that he might lose. It is the suppression of this anxiety that creates the sexualised unconscious in the young boy and also marks the onset of the super-ego by which the principle of law (or authority) becomes established as the beginning of socially regulated behaviour.

This process could clearly not occur in the same way in the girl given the actual absence of the penis. Freud had talked of the girl’s ‘penis envy’ resulting from her necessarily unsuccessful attempts to compete with the father. It is important to be clear at this point that again Freud was not advocating an anatomical reductionism. He was insistent that the penis ‘cannot be the motive, only the trigger of the child’s envy’.[[331]](#footnote-331) In other words, the body could not alone confer meaning, sexual or otherwise on anatomy or sensations. Nonetheless, Freud did now see anatomical difference as the *trigger* of genderising processes, organised around the principle of castration. In the boy this meant the imagining of the literal loss of the penis as well as the behavioural prohibitions regarding the mother’s affections imposed by the father. In the girl it meant the psychical suppression of the clitoris and its sensations. Within the family this meant the discouragement of boyish expressions of rivalry with the father and the prohibitive ‘command’ to remain by the mother’s side. The suppression that this entailed created the feminine sexualised unconscious. Only with the onset of puberty did ‘sex’ return but now, in Freud’s revised theory, centred on the vagina, the ‘clitoris’ remaining outside the reach of consciousness. This transfer of the primary locus of female sexual identity to the vagina as a site of receptivity (awaiting the phallus), driven by the ‘castration’ of the clitoris, gave Freud his asymmetric model of gendering processes.[[332]](#footnote-332) It was also the point from which Mitchell, following Lacan, took up a theoretical reworking and mobilisation of Freud that would lead her into conflict with the mainstream of the women’s movement. As she put it, taking up where Freud had left off and summarising the main terms of the debate:

*In the final analysis, the debate relates to the question of the psychoanalytic understanding both of sexuality and of the unconscious and brings to the fore issues of the relationship between psychoanalysis and biology and sociology. Is it biology, environmental influence, object-relations or the castration complex that makes for the psychological distinction between the sexes?* [[333]](#footnote-333)

In Lacan’s interpretative framework Freud had been limited by the conceptual tools available to him. Working still within the theoretical legacy of the nineteenth century, Freud’s work was saddled with hydraulic and thermodynamic metaphors that limited his ability to adequately explain the interactions of the human subject and normalising social-sexual processes. Moreover, despite the use of symbols in Freud’s analytical work in relation to dreams in his early work and later with respect to biographical interpretations, the Lacanian standpoint viewed Freud’s application of ‘the symbol’ as limited in its explanatory power. Particularly, without knowledge of the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, Freud was unaware of the role of the ‘signifier’ fore-grounded by the new linguistics that was developing contemporaneously. Lacan had applied the type of socio-cultural analysis to Freud that Saussure’s linguistics had made possible, reworking the Castration Complex accordingly.

For Mitchell then, the gendering processes that determined sexual destiny pre-existed the infant in the form of a Symbolic Order. The erogenous zones of the body, not yet inscribed with social meaning, would come into sexual life only as part of a ‘chain of signifiers’ in which the phallus serves as *the* signifier of sexual difference. One consequence of this was that the literal presence of the father was not key to the sexual development of the person. Even with the father weakened or physically absent, normalising processes would nonetheless shape sexual identity. Fundamental to sexual difference now was not biology, sociological influences nor object-relations but a split in the subject that marked both the infant’s realisation of itself apart from the world, and the beginnings of both the male and female sexual unconscious. The ‘subject’ in this cosmology was not a Cartesian ‘self’; the unified, singular ‘I’ of the Cogito. Rather it was a fractured entity, always unstable and forever seeking an unattainable resolution of its contradictions by union with another. Pulled every way by life and circumstance, the subject’s striving for heterosexual union was ‘normal’ now merely in the sociological sense. Whilst the dominant (*i.e.* more *frequent*) form of union was that of male and female coupling, the fact of homosexuality was no longer to be seen as a confounding aberration, but rather as one cultural variant of a complex universality. Finally, for Mitchell as for Lacan, the subjective ‘split’ from which sexual difference arose represented a primary *alienation* that would launch the person on their sexual life trajectory. In-so-doing it created also the moment of human ontogenesis: the end of nature; and the beginning of culture.

So, Mitchell had answered the question with which she had begun. No original sexual difference existed. There was no essential ‘male’ and ‘female’. Rather, a ‘primordial split’ in the psyche of the infant created the person *as* male or female within a pre-existent symbolic order. For Mitchell, sex did not arise from object-relations (Klein, Jones, Horney *et. al*), sociological factors (Adler) nor from a unitary biological drive (Fleiss),[[334]](#footnote-334) but from a sequence of symbolically mediated social interactions. This process was animated by asymmetrical developments for the female and male infant, but in each case genital repression (castration) arising from the intrusions of the father, played the central role: of the penis in the boy; of the clitoris for the girl. In the case of the girl the drama was played to its end game at puberty with the re-presenting of the vagina as *the* site of sexual receptivity in the young woman. The consequences of the analysis were far-reaching. If correct then the sexualised split in the infant’s psyche into male or female at the very beginning of personhood, represented a fundamental defeat of the free and unfettered human subject. As such it provided the irrational sub-soil into which ideology put down its first roots. It also meant, something Mitchell was at pains to stress,[[335]](#footnote-335) that in any future socialist society the type of sexual difference created by capitalist society would not simply fall away under socialism: it would require a generational change in modes of child rearing from the earliest stages of the life of the infant. Equally of course, it meant that sexual difference is not a natural fact of human development and can itself be quite differently configured in a different type of society. Seen in this light, it secured the *possibility* of human liberation - and of the most radical kind.

*Louise Althusser*

Whilst Juliet Mitchell tilted against the feminist consensus regarding Freud in the English-speaking world, ‘across the channel’ (once more) a psychoanalytical re-working of Marxism was underway in the work of Louis Althusser. Althusser’s goal was to overturn the Hegelian legacy within Marxism, to recast Marxism as a thoroughgoing science. This involved: considerations of the logic and ‘reading’ of Marx’s key-work *Das Kapital*; the question of the historical subject and of human subjectivity in general; the rejection of familiar categories within Marxism such as ‘alienation’; the teasing out of bourgeois humanism from Marx’s own formulations; and the re-interpretation of the concept of ideology within Marxist sociology.

In his approach to Marx, Althusser adopts a methodology of ‘symptomatic reading’ that, guided by Lacan, he takes from Freud.[[336]](#footnote-336) In his psychoanalytical practice Freud had paid close attention to the silences of his patients, their elisions and avoidances as well as their explicit statements. These were clues to the ways and means by which the unconscious evaded detection and capture by the conscious self – and by the analyst behind the couch. For Althusser a symptomatic reading of *Das Kapital* with careful attention to “the lacunae, blanks and failures of rigour”[[337]](#footnote-337) could reveal the essential nature of Marx’s logic beneath its formal economic analysis and political imperatives. This type of ‘reading’ then could bring Marx’s *epistemology* to the surface.

In his discussions of the logic of *das Kapital* Althusser drew upon parallels he saw with the work of Freud. In his account of his own reading of both Marx and of Freud, Althusser emphasises the historical nature of ‘the objects’ of both: Capital in the case of Marx; the psyche in the case of Freud. It is not only that both exist and develop ‘in time’; rather it is in the character of their movement in time that Althusser sees their commonality. For Marx, Capital evolves in successive forms from mercantilism in the late mediaeval period, through to the fully-fledged commodity production and established factory system. For Freud the psyche also evolves through stages of Oedipal formation and suppression, latency, pubescent crisis and (‘all being well’) successful resolution and sexual transference. For both, the patterns of change are those of compression and intensification, displacement, concatenation and transformation.

*... I do not mean that this analysis suppresses the problem of the relation between component histories and general history – a problem which must necessarily be solved before it is possible to speak strictly of ‘a history’. On the contrary, it shows that this problem cannot be solved unless history really* constitutes *its object, instead of* receiving *it. In this sense, the term* analysis *used by Marx has exactly the same significance as that given it by Freud when he speaks of the ‘analysis of an individual history’: just as Freud’s analysis produces a new definition of his object (sexuality, the libido), i.e., really constitutes it by showing the variation of its* formations*, which is the reality of a history, so Marx’s analysis constitutes his object (the ‘productive forces’) by constructing the history of its successive forms, i.e., forms which have a determinate place in the structure of the mode of production.*[[338]](#footnote-338)

This observation, drawing on his reading of Marx’s *Das Kapital* and particularly Freud’s 1905 *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, led Althusser to the notion of ‘epistemological analogies’[[339]](#footnote-339) that connected to two figures. Whilst outwardly Marx and Freud were of quite different historical, political and social milieus, they nonetheless shared a common approach towards understanding the objects of their critical inquiries.

Althusser’s symptomatic reading of *Das Kapital* in particular gives his assessments of Marx’s logic the character of linguistic-conceptual technique. His considerations of the ‘object’ of political economy for example revolve around a distinction between the ‘real object’ and the ‘object-for-knowledge’. With this distinction providing the foundation of our approach to political economy we separate the empirical object-world as it is outside of consciousness, and its psychical simulacrum, operating as a driver within it whilst loaded with its own ideological excrescences. Without this distinction, we fall prey to the “fraudulent unity’ of the word ‘object’”.[[340]](#footnote-340) So, just as with Freud, for whom the unconscious became comprehensible (indeed apprehensible) *via* his symptomatic psychoanalysis, in Marx the object of political economy, Capital, becomes open to understanding by its separation from different forms of value (land value, rent value and so on) and its identification as value itself. By this distinction, between the object as it is in itself and its ideological expression, a new science is born.

*In this case, it is strictly correct to speak of a* revolution*, of a qualitative leap, of a modification affecting the very* structure of the object *… In fact, this theoretical revolution which is visible in the break which separates a new science from the ideology which gave it birth, reverberates profoundly in the object of the theory, which is at the same moment itself the site of a revolution – and becomes peculiarly a* new object*.* [[341]](#footnote-341)

Considering the types of object that provided the bases for Freudian psychoanalysis on the one hand, and Marxist political-economy on the other, Althusser appropriated a key category from Lacan: that of ‘metonymic causality’. Lacan had found in Freud a notion of causality quite different from that of the sequential ‘X follows Y’ type. Rather, in his dream-analysis Freud had used techniques of interpretation that found ‘synchronic’ causes acting as *effects* of the ‘dream work’ - to create the ‘manifest dream’ as an entire structure. In other words, the causalities that worked upon the ‘dream material’ (taken from life) did not come from an exterior realm, but rather emerged from the structures of the dream itself. This immanent, metonymic process, operated for Freud through mechanisms such as the ‘condensation’ of partial fragments of reality and their ‘compression’ into meaning for the dreamer. This identification of the metonymic character of the psyche in Freud established it as an object of a special type; known only by its effects and self-generative status. For Althusser the same was true of ‘Capital’ constituted as a human relationship, rather than a thing amenable to external identification.

Althusser’s interest in Freudian categories was more than a general eclecticism. He was concerned above all to identify a logic that broke from what he saw as the vestiges of idealism in the Hegelian legacy Marx had inherited as a young intellectual. To take a central example in Althusser’s philosophy, the metonymic notion of causality applied to history suggested a motive force in which the *totality* of each historical moment interacts in a complex fashion with its *specific effects*. *Contra* Hegel however, these complex interactions were not ones in which each element exerted equal effect. Rather, a structure inhered within each complex that would determine the outcome to a concrete conjuncture. This would always ultimately emerge from the economic realm, though never as a pure isolate of a historical process. This was the ‘structure-in-dominance’ which for Althusser captured both the contingent aspects of history as well as its underlying determinism. Of most interest here is the fact that Althusser deliberately eschewed the Hegelian concept of ‘contradiction’, looking rather to Freud (*via* Lacan) for his theoretical formulations. Specifically, it was the concept of ‘overdetermination’ he was to (reluctantly) adopt for a non-Hegelian language, used to articulate his philosophy of history.

*I am not particularly taken by this term* overdetermination *(borrowed from other disciplines), but I shall use it in the absence of anything better, both as an* index *and as a* problem*, and also because it enables us to see quite clearly why we are dealing with something* quite different from the Hegelian contradiction*.*[[342]](#footnote-342)

Althusser further clarifies his distinction: the Hegelian contradiction is always *simple*. Of course, Hegel is aware of complexity in history. The multiple and interacting expressions of historical action and meaning, the accumulation of the past within the present and its presages of the future historical manifestations, all characterise Hegelian interpretations of history.

*However, it can be shown that this complexity is not the complexity of an* effective overdetermination*, but the complexity of a cumulative* internalization *which is only an apparent overdetermination.”*

and

[For Hegel] “A circle of circles, consciousness has only one centre*, which solely determines it; it would need circles* with another centre than itself – decentred circles – *for it to be affected at its centre by their effectivity, in short for its essence to be over-determined by them. But this is not the case.*[[343]](#footnote-343)

And so we see, in Althusser’s view these complexities remain for Hegel reducible to a unified essence-of-the-age; a striving of historical consciousness to become manifest as the ultimate quest of Spirit (*Geist*) lying at the centre of the historical moment. This for Althusser, is the *simplicity* of Hegel’s notion of contradiction. For Althusser (as for Freud and Lacan), there is no such unified centre that lies undifferentiated beneath the outward variety of consciousness. Rather historical complexity is *real*: the result of *de*-centred historical forces and of competing and conflicting determinations that interact with one another and with the totality of their historical conditions. It was to express this non-Hegelian historical logic and metonymic causality that Althusser looked to Freudian thought.

Motivating Althusser’s concern to shake off the Hegelian residue in Marxism, and with it the notion of an underlying unity to consciousness, is a more fundamental desire to rid Marxism of historicism. Crucial to that was shedding the idea of ‘the subject’ in history. For Althusser there is no historical ‘Subject’. Rather our subjectivity, what we experience as our subject-selves, is always emergent; the result of concrete conjunctural factors and forces that shape our circumstance and that are beyond our control. Once our contingent subject-identities are constituted, we reach for an attachable essence by which we can root ourselves in the world. And so we lapse into the universalising tendencies of bourgeois-humanism that seek always to maintain the historical moment ‘in stasis’ (and wedded to its own interest) as an unchangeable natural order and organised around the abstract concept of ‘Man’.

*‘Man’ is a myth of bourgeois ideology: Marxism-Leninism cannot* start *from ‘man’. It starts ‘from the economically given social period’; and, at the end of its analysis, when it arrives’,* it may find real men*. These men are the* point of arrival *of an analysis which starts from the social relations of the existing mode of production, from class relations, and from class struggle. These men are quite different from the ‘man’ of bourgeois ideology.* [[344]](#footnote-344)

For Althusser this rejection of bourgeois humanism is driven by imperatives that are both epistemological and political. Abstracting from concrete historical circumstance, speaking of ‘Man’ as an essence removed from its social relationships - as does Sartre, avers Althusser[[345]](#footnote-345) - is necessarily obfuscating and intrinsically inimical to a scientific understanding of both history and human action in the world. It is also dangerous to the destiny of human kind (and by inference, to the workers’ movement). This Althusser insists, was Marx’s meaning.

*Strictly in respect to theory* […] *one can and must speak openly of Marx’s* theoretical anti-humanism, *and see in this* theoretical anti-humanism *the absolute (negative) precondition of the (positive) knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation. It is impossible to* know *anything about men except on the absolute precondition that the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes. So any thought that appeals to Marx for any kind of restoration of a theoretical anthropology or humanism is no more than ashes,* theoretically*. But in practice it could pile up a monument of pre-Marxist ideology that would weigh down on real history and threaten to lead it into blind alleys.*[[346]](#footnote-346)

The severity of this statement makes Althusser’s meaning plain: any tendency to essentialise humanity (or ‘Man’) draws upon bourgeois ideology and has no place within Marxism – properly understood. This has consequences for the place of key terms within Marxism. Here Althusser highlights what he sees as the ‘paradox’ of Hegel’s influence upon the young Marx. Despite Hegel’s historical idealism - his cosmology based upon the self-unfolding of the Idea into manifold reality – there is for Althusser an implicit materialism also, in that the subject is always emergent, forever developing out of concrete circumstance, and never ‘forever-fixed’. Considering the term ‘alienation’ there is never a fixed subject ‘that *is* alienated’ (*qua* Feuerbach); rather alienation always precedes the subject constitutively as its motive force. It is the historical process itself then that is the subject - animated of course by real men and women with all their particular subjectivity – with no eternal *S*ubject that stands apart from it. This then was Hegel’s great inheritance to Marx: the idea of the ‘process (history) without a subject’. It is also a notion that Althusser sees in Freud, stressing that it “underpins the whole of Freud’s work”.[[347]](#footnote-347)

Whilst Althusser freely acknowledges his debt to Freud, referring in one place to the ‘new continent’ that had been opened by his work,[[348]](#footnote-348) it is the influence of Lacan in his theory of ideology that is most pronounced and for which he is best known. Echoing Lacan’s Register Theory, Althusser tells us that, like the unconscious, ‘ideology is eternal’. By this he does not mean only that it transcends history and that it has always been with us, but rather that it is ‘everywhere’ and all encompassing; a kind of medium for all mental representations. Indeed, there is a double aspect to ideology for Althusser. Ideology first of all is the imaginary representation to individuals of their world, their conditions of existence. This is a familiar use of the word that describes the realm of religious belief, notions of order and natural justice and so on. Although it is a realm that must always correspond to reality on some level, it is principally a sphere of illusion, mystification and obfuscation of social relations.

*To speak in Marxist language, if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agent of production, exploitation, repression, ideologization and scientific practice, and from relations deriving from the relations of production, we can say the following: all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.*[[349]](#footnote-349)

The direct influence of Lacan becomes more apparent in Althusser’s second aspect of ideology; its material existence in the world. Ideology for Althusser is not just a matter of belief; an essentially *mental* affair. Rather, it is a practical matter. In Althusser’s schema belief and action are interdependent. Citing Pacsal,[[350]](#footnote-350) he uses the example of the supplicant who kneels in prayer *in order* to believe. An ideology then is a material practice that works within a world of rituals, obligations, expected behaviours and so on. Together this provides the ‘material ideological apparatus’ through which the individual exercises their belief as action-in-the-world. Ideology cannot exist in abstraction from human activity: and there is no other way it can work. Coming to his central thesis, whilst ideology can only exist for and through subjects, equally subjects *must* exist in and through ideology. Again, Althusser insists that there is no Subject, and are now no *subjects*, that can exist independently in abstraction from a specific ideology. ‘The person’ then, lives ‘spontaneously’ in ideology: it is *constitutive* of the subject and *vice versa*.

Developing this line of thinking, Althusser emphasises the pre-existence of ideology for the person. We do not choose our circumstances, of course. But more than this, in Althusser’s materialist thesis the ideologies that constitute the social world into which we grow and within which we conduct our lives, call upon us in myriad ways. With each beckoning we respond and in-so-doing become and confirm ourselves as subjects in that structure. This process is an ‘interpellation’. When a friend at the door says ‘it is me’ we answer in familiar fashion, when we bump into an acquaintance we greet one another with mutual recognition and when the policeman on the street calls ‘Hey, you there!’ we turn, not out of guilt, but out of a spontaneous understanding that the hailing is ‘for us’. And as we turn around, we become (once more) the subjects we are.[[351]](#footnote-351) This reality, of the subject’s *insertion* into the world, means that ‘individuals are always-already subjects’.[[352]](#footnote-352) The individual in other words does not create themselves; rather they are created and recreated as subjects by the ideological forces that interpellate them into a pre-existing social totality.

One consequence of this interpellated status of the subject is a distinction that follows between ‘the individual’ and ‘the subject’. The sense that the individual has of their own self-as-subject, that is in some fundamental way *them*, is a delusion. This separation of the person and the subject brings us back once more to psychoanalysis:

*That an individual is always already a subject, even before he is born … is not a paradox at all. Freud shows that individuals are always ‘abstract’ with respect to the subjects they already are, simply by noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a ‘birth’, that ‘happy event ’… it is certain in advance that it will bear its Father’s Name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable … It is clear that this ideological constraint and pre-appointment, and all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some relation with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and genital ‘stages’ of sexuality i.e. in the ‘grip’ of what Freud registered by its effects as being the unconscious.*[[353]](#footnote-353)

Althusser is not here making the banal point that the neonate comes into the world through processes and structures they have not chosen. Rather this entrance is a prelude to an ideological situation that will lay down deep and enduring foundations of identity, socialisation and thought. Here the presence of Lacan in Althusser’s formulations is explicit. We have already seen that for Althusser (as for Lacan) there is no singular, fixed or eternal ‘subject’ that underlies either social or historical processes. But now we can also discern the direct influence of Lacan’s Register Theory upon his account of the mechanisms at work to produce this result.

In the pre-Oedipal phase of the child’s development interactions with others and crucially the Mother in the early years, create for Althusser, an ‘imaginary’ realm. This imaginary phase (corresponding to Lacan’s Imaginary) precedes the Symbolic Order that asserts itself with the successful resolution of the Oedipal Complex; so ushering social law into the behaviour and life-orientations of the young adult. Nonetheless, this imaginary phase prepares the way for the Law of the Symbolic with a thousand ‘yes’s’ and ‘no’s’, acceptances and rejections and the entire range of “*empirical* modalities of this constitutive Order”.[[354]](#footnote-354) With the formal entrance of this Order into the life of the person, so also commences the Law of Culture. This process of enculturation revolves around an external Subject that lies in wait, intending to ‘centre’ the subject in their ideological world. The particular Subject, a construction that whilst public in form is also responsible for moulding (or, *qua* Lacan, ‘writing’) the unconscious, may be ‘the Nation’, ‘the State’, ‘God’ *etc.* The entire process is also ‘speculary’ with a ‘mirror-structure’ by which the subject can recognise their own image (present and future) reflected in the Subject, confirming their absorption within it and guaranteeing their place in the Order it creates.[[355]](#footnote-355) Althusser characterises this logic of socio-cultural internalisation as one of a ‘quadruple system of interpellation’.

*The duplicate mirror-image of ideology ensures simultaneously:*

*The interpellation of ‘individuals’ as subjects;*

*Their subjection to the Subject;*

*The mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects’ recognition of each other, and finally the subject’s recognition of himself;*

*The absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be alright: Amen –* ‘So be it’.[[356]](#footnote-356)

Lastly, the acceptance of the ‘order of things’ for which the Oedipal drama is responsible, has also sexualising consequences for the person. In this process and its final resolution, the person becomes fully ‘male’ or ‘female’. In the Oedipal phase the child tests out its imaginary fantasies against the reality of the Symbolic Order that anticipates its arrival. The child’s realisation of the impossibility of their wishes to rival the Father for the Mother’s affections, become resolved into the assumption of the right to *eventually* have what Mummy and Daddy have: *masculinity* (and so feminine attention in the form of a wife for the boy; and *femininity* (and so masculine attention in the form of a husband) for the girl. So, the ‘ideological-fixing’ of the person to their social order is simultaneously one of ‘*sexual*-fixing’. Ideology is not only constitutive of the subject, it is also ‘sexed’ at its root.

**Modern currents**

*The strange return of vitalism*

As we have seen, for two decades from the early 1960s onwards, the work of Althusser provided the route into French Marxism for psychoanalytical theory represented by influence of Lacan. From the early 1970s the work of Deleuze and Guattari can be seen as a counter-current – an ‘anti-psychiatry’ reaction - to that line of influence, which whilst drawing upon both Marxism and psychoanalysis, also critiques both traditions of thought; and in a most innovative (and on a first reading, confounding) fashion.

In their first collaboration, *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*[[357]](#footnote-357) (henceforth *Anti-Oedipus*) published in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari addressed themselves to central concepts within Marxist and Freudian thought. In-so-doing they drew these concepts out from their established theoretical domains and onto new terrain. From psychoanalysis, ‘desire’ was positioned as a generative force that pre-existed the individual subject or social group and that pervaded the social sphere. From Marxism, ‘production’ retained its historicising status, concretely defining the social structure and its class-character. The result in the hands of Deleuze and Guattari was the concept of ‘desiring-production’ representing a libidinal energy that moulds and flows through and across the social body. So, whilst ‘desire’ emanated from nature as a demiurgic vital energy, the forms of production it encountered provided the social ‘machines’ (social formations) that sought to both restrain it *and* to channel it; inscribing it with historical meaning. Where this process fails, where connections between ‘desiring-production’ and the social machines that harness it break down, the outcome for the individual can be catastrophic. The result is the ‘schizoid’ state; or to give it its clinical title, the schizophrenic case. For Deleuze and Guattari this state has a special significance in providing a fracture through which the deeper subject-creating processes at work can be seen: this they call ‘schizoanalysis’.

Apart from the vitalistic cosmology that is central to *Anti-Oedipus*, the work offers a theory of historical development. As a universal principle desiring-production has no particular form; it is a Spinozian ‘substance’, with no concrete modality. This, Deleuze and Guattari express as the ‘body-without-organs’. The ‘body’ in question acquires ‘organs’ as it emerges into a historical setting. In primitive societies, binding patterns of desiring-production are forged as totemic rituals, behaviours and ornament that tie the person and their group to the earth. The flow of desiring-production is territorial. With the rise of class, this social-material flow is disrupted and re-channelled away now from the earth. Instead, it is directed towards the patriarch, the ruler or the despot. The social meaning created by desiring-production becomes mediated by the systems of exploitation that dominate, and the person’s reliance upon them is sealed. This de-locating ‘de-territorialisation’ is taken to new levels by capitalism. Under capitalism a shift occurs from cultural codes that attach symbolically to a person (the despot) to abstract axioms of quantification. These provide the material basis for the calculus of investment and reward that governs the relationship between capital and labour. Desiring-production, harnessed now to the economic realm of exploitation, finds its only cultural outlet in the privatised individual and fundamentally so within the family, so recreating the modern form of the Oedipal dynamic identified by Freud.

In the second major part of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* collaboration, *A Thousand Plateaus,*[[358]](#footnote-358)published in 1980*,* Deleuze and Guattari apply these core concepts once more, but now developed and differentiated with applications across with a far wider range of topical references traversing geology, linguistics, biology, the political state and so on, each constituting ‘strata’ of reality that operate and emerge under their own dynamics. With respect to psychoanalysis, a largely negative critique is pursued in which the analyst is portrayed as a dictatorial figure, bolstered by a privileged position from which they can impose dominant discourses and ‘codes’ of interpretation. With respect to Marxism, whilst there are passages that suggest a formal adherence to some central Marxist categories, their applications are unconventional. At issue for Deleuze and Guarttari is the very architecture of thought itself. So, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly reject psychoanalysis as an oppressive and reductive discourse. However, their attitude to Marxism differs in that some purposeful use is made of concepts that are recognisably Marxist. This is true for instance of their discussion of the state in relation to labour in which we see terms such as ‘division of labor’, ‘labor power’, ‘labor flows’ and ‘surplus labor’ appear. In their wider discursions however, their uses of classical Marxist theory are skewed by the fact that Marxism is also a target of their critique, albeit more obliquely compared to their assault on Freud.

For Deleuze and Guattari, whilst both psychoanalysis and Marxism are ‘arborescent’ modes of thought, characterised by a tree-like structure that develops in a linear fashion, schizoanalysis and the broader account that they develop of how things come-to-be, is ‘rhizomatic’; conjuring up the image of an endlessly self-proliferating system of multiply-connecting generative points, without a beginning or an end, and without an organising centre. So, where Freud saw an Id, an ego and a super-ego, Deleuze and Guattari see instead ‘plateaus’ of ‘multiplicities’ of ‘intensities’ (‘properties’) at the micro level of emergent reality that combine to create macro (or ‘molar’) level structures (or ‘assemblages’). To illustrate, in their discussion of the ‘Wolf-man’, Freud’s famous case in which he sees Oedipal significance in the dream-appearance of ‘the wolf’ as having a *representational* meaning (“It’s daddy”), Deleuze and Guattari point out that there are ‘many wolves’ in this dream, each with their own status and concrete meaning for the dreamer. Their emphasis is on the empirical multiplicity, rather than upon the abstracted and, in their schema, artificial categories of interpretation imposed by the analyst (in this case, Freud himself).

*No sooner does Freud discover the greatest art of the unconscious, this art of molecular multiplicities, than we find him tirelessly at work bringing back molar unities, reverting to his familiar themes of the father, the penis, the vagina, Castration with a capital C ... (On the verge of discovering a rhizome, Freud always returns to mere roots.)* [[359]](#footnote-359)

*Freud tried to approach crowd phenomena from the point of view of the unconscious, but he did not see clearly, he did not see that the unconscious itself was fundamentally a crowd. He was myopic and hard of hearing; he mistook crowds for a single person.*[[360]](#footnote-360)

Although Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with the micro-multiplicities that they insist are eclipsed by arborescent types of thought, they are also concerned with ‘macro’ reality. As assemblages work upon multiplicities that constitute the inchoate ‘substance’ (the ‘body-without-organs’) from which the modalities of the world are created, two major planes emerge: the ‘plane of consistency’ that exists as the realm of empirical multiplicities driving their cosmology; and the ‘plane of organisation’ of macro-structure, representing a transcendent realm of law and cultural coding. In keeping with their ‘rhizomic’ metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari reject the notion of the singular ‘subject’ that provides a central node around which the person’s sense-of-self become organised. Processes of ‘subjectification’ occur indeed; however, they do not conform to the model of the Cogito in which a stable Subject, the ‘I’, commands centre stage within the psyche. Deluze’s and Guattari’s meaning here is conveyed in their discussion of the Mexican magical cosmology of Being that revolves around the distinction between the *tonal* (the ‘day’ realm of the conscious self) and the *nagual* (the ‘night’ realm of the forces and animal-spirits from which it must be protected).

*The tonal seems to cover many disparate things: it is the organism, and also all that is organized and organizing; but it is also significance, and all that is signifying or signified, all that is susceptible to interpretation, explanation, all that is memorizable in the form of something recalling something else; finally, it is the Self (Moi), the subject, the historical, social, or individual person, and the corresponding feelings. In short, the tonal is everything, including God, the judgment of God, since it "makes up the rules by which it apprehends the world. So, in a manner of speaking, it creates the world." [[361]](#footnote-361) Yet the tonal is only an island. For the nagual is also everything. And it is the same everything, but under such conditions that the body without organs has replaced the organism and experimentation has replaced all interpretation, for which it no longer has any use. Flows of intensity, their fluids, their fibers, their continuums and conjunctions of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions, have replaced the world of the subject … The nagual … dismantles the strata. It is no longer an organism that functions but a BwO that is constructed. No longer are there acts to explain, dreams or phantasies to interpret, childhood memories to recall, words to make signify; instead, there are colors and sounds, becomings and intensities (and when you become-dog, don't ask if the dog you are playing with is a dream or a reality, if it is "your goddam mother" or something else entirely). There is no longer a Self [Moi] that feels, acts, and recalls; there is "a glowing fog, a dark yellow mist" [[362]](#footnote-362) that has affects and experiences movements, speeds.* [[363]](#footnote-363) [[364]](#footnote-364)

This emphasis upon the disorganised realm of the *nagual*, with its ‘flows’, ‘becomings’ and ‘intensities’ (we might also say of ‘multiplicities’ on the ‘plane of consistency’) links the conceptual trajectory of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* with their political influence. Deleuze and Guattari see in the ‘State’, any state, an organ (an ‘assemblage’) that seeks to colonise these flows, to over-code them with prescribed and sanctioned meanings, making them safe in the process. Whilst the ‘war-machine’ that is the free movement of resistance and opposition to all types of tyranny proliferates ‘nomadically’ across its fields of action and activity, the State works tirelessly to capture it, reterritorialize it and make it its own. The critique here is of ‘statism’ itself; whether of the political Right or Left. Insofar then as the Left espouses any type of political state as being ‘the solution’, the endpoint, or even the ‘means-to-the-end’ it turns itself against the multitude that, by virtue of their sheer number assume the status of an overcoming and liberating force. The resonances here with the ‘Arab Spring’, the ‘Occupy Movement’ and other social movements that have been characterised by spontaneous organisational networks and social media-based modes of communication to great effect, are easy to see. The works of Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004; 2009)[[365]](#footnote-365) for instance, have been a major influence within the largest social movements against the institutions of global capitalism in the early 2000s. Against the unaccountable power of the few they invoke precisely the democratic potential of the ‘many’; working through decentred and networked movements; with a ‘swarm intelligence’;[[366]](#footnote-366) attacking their opponents from every side with unpredictable timing; and merging back into the landscape without trace. The influence of Deleuze and Guattari is evident and explicit.

The notion of ‘desiring-production’ that we have seen is central to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s theory (especially in *Anti-Oedipus*), and justifies their inclusion in a study of the interactions of Marxism and psychoanalysis; as does the *political* influence their works have gained. Thereafter their conceptualisations stray so far from either of these major traditions of thought – indeed, regarding their ‘arborescent’ conceptual architecture, rejecting them *in toto* - that there is sense of having reached a dead-end for any further pursuit of our central inquiry. Considering their treatment of psychoanalysis and of Freud specifically, they are in the end better placed under the ‘anti-psychiatry’ label that is often attached to them.[[367]](#footnote-367)

*Subject and structure*

Considering more recent and current influences, two names dominate as incarnates of the Freudo-Marxist intellectual legacy: Slavoj Žižek; and Alain Badiou. In both cases, whilst their Marxist (or more correctly, in the case of Badiou, Maoist) influences are direct (with Althusser being a lodestone for both), their psychoanalytical inheritances have taken a more complicated route, *via* Lacan. For both, however, in different ways, their principal project has been that of restoring the militant subject as a historical agent, where its role had been made redundant in Althusser’s theoretical restructuring of Marxism. It is this aspect of the work of these two figures that will shape our final reflections.

For Lacan the human subject was characterised by a ‘bar’ (*barre*), borrowed from Saussurean linguistics, that separates the signified object from the signifier representing it. In the Lacanian treatment of this relationship, the signifier is connected, not directly to the object (as in Saussure’s account), but rather to other signifiers in a chain that must be analysed to trace the object to which it refers. In the socialisation of which this ‘chain of signification’ is constitutive, the suman subject is split, fractured into parts by a Symbolic Order that imposes itself *via* the structuring family processes of neonatal and early infant development. The outcome is a Subject that is defined by what it *lacks* (or cannot access within its unconscious), rather than what it *is*. This ‘lack’, inaccessible to the conscious subject, coincides with Lacan’s Real, residing stubbornly beyond symbolic organisation, and troubling the conscious Self with its uncontrolled effects. And so emerges a weak, divided and ineffective Self that is reliant on an authorising presence (the Father), that it hopes can achieve symbolic completeness, so that it may root itself in the world. It is from this starting point that Žižek sets out to restore the Subject to its previously central place in European philosophy and in the concrete processes of real history.

Žižek, against the tide of late 20th Century and 21st Century Critical Theory and in characteristically idiosyncratic style, positions his work as a defence of the ‘I’ of the Cartesian cogito. His defence however, is of a strongly Lacanian inflexion; drawing also upon Kant’s critique of Descartes in his discussion of the ‘Transcendental Analytic’ in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[[368]](#footnote-368) In that critique Kant rejects the notion of a substantial Subject that is separate from the objective world. Rather, the Subject is always attached to and mediated, articulated, and expressed through an object. A consequence of this is that the subject can never confront itself, in some pure sense. This impossibility does not stop the subject striving to know itself, to see itself ‘as it is’. The result is Kant’s ‘Empirical Subject’, the subject-as-object or more intuitively, the ‘Self’ that is the construction that emerges from this struggle. However, tragedy lies in the fact that the true Subject remains elusive, existing in the Lacanian ‘Real’, beyond the reach of the subject-as-Self that senses always what it cannot attain: that is a true self-image. So, the Subject does not stand alone and is never identical with the Self. Rather, in the ever temporally forward subject-object movement of existence, it represents a ‘turning-back’, a ‘looking behind’ on the part of the Subject, a ‘crack’ or ‘crease’ in the ‘universal field of Being’.

This striving of the Subject to know itself, does not occur in a vacuum, but in a social world. In Lacan’s cosmology, as we have seen the social world is organised as a Symbolic Order. As the Subject moves through its world it asks of others ‘Che voui?’ (‘What do you want?’) This question is fundamental to the social development of the infant as it begins to navigate and negotiate the wants and commands of its parents and older siblings. As it does so, the signifiers that constitute the symbolic structure of its world become internalised and incorporated into cultural codes and modes of behaviour. These come to represent the ‘Big Other’ that embodies the norms demanded by society and towards which the developing young child orientates itself. In learning of its place in the world however, the Subject experiences its own ever elusive nature as the Lacanian ‘lack’; the loss of *jouissance*. The object that it seeks, the full transparency of itself-to-itself, is now compensated for with a construction, an object that is inferred from the mystery of the Real and that masks the Subject’s own creative agency from itself. This is the *objet petit à*, an object that eludes total capture; that is sublime to the Subject. This ‘sublime object’ becomes then a metonymic representative of the *jouissance* that has been lost, but also the means by which the Subject seeks to secure itself in the world. Despite its opacity, it is a source of fascination and obsession; and its loss a source of terror. Žižek gives as examples of the *object petit à*, of the ‘sublime objects of desire’, God, ‘the king’ and ‘the nation’. For the Self they may include the sexual other, the precious object, the fetish; their ‘reality’ relying not upon their ontological status, but rather in the *belief* of subjects that they are real, and upon the performative subjective behaviour that follows.

*The subject is always fastened, pinned, to a signifier which represents him for the other, and through this pinning he is loaded with a symbolic mandate, he is given a place in the intersubjective network of symbolic relations. The point is that this mandate is ultimately always arbitrary: since its nature is performative, it cannot be accounted for by reference to the ‘real’ properties and capacities of the subject. So, loaded with this mandate, the subject is automatically confronted with a certain ‘Che voui?’, with a question of the Other. The Other is addressing him as if he himself possesses the answer to the question of why he has this mandate, but the question is, of course, unanswerable. The subject does not know why he is occupying this place in the symbolic network. His own answer to this ‘Che voui?’ of the Other can only be the hysterical question: Why am I [a teacher, a master, a king …]? Briefly: ‘Why am I what you [the big Other] are saying that I am?’* [[369]](#footnote-369)[Sublime Object of Desire p 125-6.]

The applications of insights that draw upon a combination of Lacanian psychoanalysis and German idealist philosophy to cultural and political analysis have been extensive and potent in Žižek’s prolific output. However, Žižek insists in some of his most influential texts, that the ‘ontic’ (familiar experience) and the ‘ontological’ (the conditions of the possibility of experience) are separate realms and that the former cannot be derived from the latter. Despite this, in his discussions of types of political regime, as well as in his cinema critiques there would seem to be an affect from one to the other. The manipulations of the ‘sublime object’ by political regimes of different registers for instance, is illuminating for our understandings of the irrationalities of political behaviour. However, Žižek defends not only the Cartesian ‘I’, but also the ‘militant Subject’ that critiques, challenges and confronts the pre-existing social limitations of the Symbolic Order. In doing so, he reasserts the possibility of the Subject that breeches the illusory veil hiding it from itself, that approaches the truth lurking within the Real and that ‘traverses the fantasy’ so making the truly ethical act a concrete proposal.

*… what is so difficult to accept is not the fact that the true act in which noumenal and phenomenal dimensions coincide is forever out of reach; the true trauma lies in the opposite awareness that there are acts, that they do occur, and that we have to come to terms with them.* [[370]](#footnote-370)

Here he touches base with the only current critical philosopher with whom he acknowledges an affinity: Alain Badiou. It is to the work of Alain Badiou that we now turn.

Badiou like Žižek seeks to restore the Subject as an historical agent. However, Badiou’s Subject is quite unlike, indeed stands opposed to, the psychical human subjectivity that would be recognisable from traditional notions of Enlightenment thinking. Rather, Badiou’s Subject, far from being a substantial - or indeed human – presence in history, is rather a procedural moment in a larger historical logic. For this formulation to become comprehensible some stage setting is required using key elements from Badiou’s philosophy of history.

In *Being and Event,*[[371]](#footnote-371) published in 1988, Badiou fastens upon an ontology – a theory of *Being* itself (or Being *qua* Being) as the condition of the possible existence of particular beings – that is grounded in mathematics. Commenting upon the replacement of philosophy by mathematics that this implies (and the resentments that result) Badiou avers:

*The philosophical rancour originates uniquely in the following: if it is correct that the philosophers have formulated the question of being, then it is not themselves but the mathematicians who have come up with the answer to that question. All that we know, and can ever know of being qua being, is set out, through the mediation of a theory of the pure multiple, by the historical discursivity of mathematics.* [[372]](#footnote-372)

This ontology is based upon ‘the count’. In other words, ‘things that are’ become self-identified as a group and, in-so-doing, enter together into a category, or ‘set’, the singularity of which is called by Badiou the ‘Count-as-One’. In this movement, a multiplicity of things becomes unified into an ordered reality. It is by this ordering, this categorisation, that the world becomes something that has structure and, with the accumulation of other categories, or counts-as-one, a meta-structure. It is only with the emergence of structure that reality becomes accessible to our cognition, something that we can know; before structure, knowledge is an impossibility.

The question of ‘what comes before’ structure (and therefore knowledge) is a matter of great importance for Badiou. This realm that is ‘not structure’ and so unknowable, is not nothing. Rather it is a realm of multiplicity also; but a multiplicity that is disordered, and so uncountable. This is, for Badiou, the ‘inconsistent multiplicity’, represented in his system as the unknowable ‘void’.

The void in Badiou’s ontological system is mysterious indeed. If it is a domain at all, it is one that is beyond apprehension. A first reading brings to mind Kant’s *noumena* or perhaps even (and relatedly) Freud’s Unconscious. These comparisons fail however, in that both of these constructs are indirectly knowable to us in the effects that they exert upon our conscious experience. This is not true of the void that exerts no such effects in its own right. A better comparison is that of Lacan’s Real. Again, however there are limitations to the comparison. Lacan’s Real is not an empty space; rather it is full of signifiers that are yet to be brought into the Symbolic Order. The void does not ‘contain’ signifiers in this sense: it is empty of signifiers which are after all already identified as such within our cognitive frame of reference. The void is much more fundamentally an ‘absence’ without substance or meaning: an ontological ‘black hole’ that we can never know. It is from this void however, that the ‘Event’ emerges.

It is a consideration of Badiou’s Event that makes clear the *a*historicism of his ontology. In contradistinction to Hegel - whose *Weltgeist* united historical eras and episodes in a striving towards a resolution of historical contradictions as a final World History - or Heidegger - for whom temporality and the positing of Being as movement in time constituted a concrete ontology of life – Badiou’s Event erupts from the void unannounced and unconnected with what has been before; its radical novelty is the meaning of the historical rupture that it constitutes. It is ‘the new’ that destroys all previously held certainties, demanding as it does so a new sense of the world.

The Event then disrupts all previous structures as well as all prior notions: it is a moment of Truth, where before there had been only ‘knowledge’. Here Badiou’s commitment to the possibility of Truth, in opposition to the Nietzchian and post-structuralist fashion for epistemological scepticism is clear. An advocate of the unified, abstract and clear formal concepts of Plato’s logic, and an enemy of the Parmenidean empirical ‘many’, and its applications across a range of perspectival, epistemological and ethical domains, Badiou in iconoclastic style, cuts across post-modernist scepticism, to assert a commitment to ‘what is’ regardless of ‘what appears to be’. That said, the Event, and the structure that it creates, must be ‘named’ in order to come into being. In other words, it must be identified as something new. Here a degree of arbitrariness applies, in that the new structure must be decided upon; a ‘decision’ is required as to what is to be the ‘one’ that is ‘Counted-as-One’. The radically new character of Event and its structure, means that there is nothing within the previously existing situation that can be used to identify and name it. This means in turn that the naming is always ‘against the grain’ and seen as non-legitimate; an ‘illegal move’.

Despite its unconnected singularity however, upon its arrival the Event also simultaneously makes a demand upon the past, as it retroactively claims what has gone before to insist for itself a historical meaning. And so it creates a new sense of place and time, a new situation and a new knowledge in its wake.

All of these moments occur if the Event is ‘authentic’. Badiou distinguishes between the authentic Event and the false event. The authentic Event is the event that brings forth the completely ‘new’, without prior cause or rationale. Though it will claim upon the past retroactively for its meaning, it does not rely upon the past for its existence. Events that Badiou considers authentic in real history include the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution. However, Hitler’s seizure of power in Germany and the burning down of the Reichstag, was not authentic in Badiou’s schema. The rise of the Nazis in Germany did not in fact usher in ‘the new’. Rather, it intensified the already existing processes of capitalist exploitation and persecution. The same criterion applies to the four domains into which the Event can erupt: politics; aesthetics; science; and love. For each of these domains then, the Event is a ‘truth procedure’, self-sufficient its revelatory power and independent of philosophy.

It is the question of the nature of the subject in history, however, with which we are most concerned. On this question Badiou’s position can be presented as a pure form of classical structuralism. Similarly to Althusser, his teacher at École Normale Supérieure, Badiou is adamant that all traces of humanism be banished from a philosophy of history. We have already seen that the undifferentiated and substantial ‘I’ of Cartesian philosophy has been jettisoned completely. Rather the ‘subject’ far from being expressed as the personal and self-aware actor in history, is now the ‘formal procedure’ of historical episodes and processes.

*Of course, the link between truth and the subject appears ancient, or in any case to have sealed the destiny of the ﬁrst philosophical modernity whose inaugural name is Descartes. However, I am claiming to reactivate these terms within an entirely different perspective: this book founds a doctrine which is effectively post-Cartesian, or even post-Lacanian, a doctrine of what, for thought, both un-binds the Heideggerean connection between being and truth and institutes the subject, not as support or origin, but as fragment of the process of a truth.*[[373]](#footnote-373)

This means that the subject is no longer the human agent operating with conscious orientation, albeit through a haze of ideological distortions and politico-cognitive inversions. Now it is seen as ‘not-human’, the sum of its interventions at key historical moments. So, whilst Robespierre ‘the man’ will be seen within conventional historiography as a significant figure and, as a person, more than worthy of biographical treatment, for Badiou it is not Robespierre that represents the subject in history, but rather ‘Jacobinism’ itself along with the Terror, the rise of the *sans-culottes* and the Convention of 1793. It is the formal and de-personalised aspects of these historical elements that is now important.

Badiou identifies three ‘dominant determinations’ of the subject to which he counter-poses his own notion of the subject as a ‘formal procedure’. These are: the familiar version of the subject as a ‘register’ of conscious experience; the ‘inter-subjective’ subject that is a ‘category of morality’; and the subject as a fiction by which an ideological state apparatus (*qua* Althusser) calls the individual into existence by its interpellating command.[[374]](#footnote-374) For Badiou, the historical subject is not identified by its personal or peculiar characteristics, but its function with respect to the truth of the Event. It is not the person, with their motivations, biography, strivings and so on, nor the historical group or party with their traditions, organisational forms or social origins, that is of interest. The subject is instead understood formally, as a rare occurrence in its self-aware form and as an operation that exists in relation to the truth of a historical process – to which it is ‘sutured’ - acting to herald its coming into being, to obstruct its emergence or to obscure it.

*… we can present the figures of the subject right away, without yet possessing the means to think the effective or concrete becoming of a historically determinate subject, which in order to be thought requires a description of the body that functions as its support. We call this presentation of figures, which is indifferent to corporeal peculiarities, the formal theory of the subject. The fact that the theory of the subject is* formal *means that ‘subject’ designates a system of forms and operations. The material support of this system is a body, and the production of this ensemble – the formalism borne by a body – is either a truth (faithful subject), a denial of truth (reactive subject) or an occultation of truth (obscure subject).*[[375]](#footnote-375)

So, whereas we might wish to protest that episodes in history are unimaginable without the people who made them, Badiou would only reply that these people (in their historical moment) are in fact the *result* of the historical Event that calls them into being, and that as a Subject together they are the necessary formal subjective side of impersonal and non-human chains of events. In their historical role then their *humanity* is not relevant; they exist *for their history* as the interventionist structure that they represent.

Finally, this structural intervention that constitutes the subject, must occur against the fixed and limiting local-spatial context of the situation that is overturned by the Event. Whilst *l’esplace* (the ‘space-place’) of the situation is fixed and rigidifying, *hors-lieu* (the ‘outside-place’) represents the movement that overturns it. This distinction is important for our understanding of Badiou’s historical subject. For example, the working-class is a socio-economic construct that belongs in its *l’esplace* as a socially static and historically inert object. Only as the proletariat, the revolutionary subjective procedure that accompanies the Evental revolution, do workers break down this rigidity as the *hors-lieu* that overcomes all spatial limitations.

**The Joy and the Despair: the long view of an impossible relationship**

As a counterpoint to the view that Marxism gives us a rigid and purely structural understanding of human experience, a philosophy of mechanistic laws and determinism, we can look to the young Marx himself, reacting against the metaphysical system building of the Hegelian schools of thought in his own time.[[376]](#footnote-376) It was the theoretical feuds over the Hegelian legacy that created the intellectual milieu in which the young Marx developed his first critical concepts. The schools of ‘speculative theism’ - seeking to salvage the ‘God’ of traditional Christianity from the abstract Geist of Hegel’s Logic – and of the Right Hegelians[[377]](#footnote-377) - seeking to uphold the Prussian form of government as the fulfilment of Hegel’s ideal State – provided the context for the intellectual revolt of which Karl Marx was a part in the 1830s. Figures such as Johann Erdmann (1805 - 1892), Johann Rosenkranz (1805 - 1879) and Johann Gabler (1753 - 1826), seeing the modern European state as the endpoint of the historical dialectic, had arrived at world-views characterised by fixed categories, rather than changeability and creative flux. Reacting against these conservative philosophical and political orthodoxies in his early publications, Marx articulated a philosophy of human action and authentic subjectivity centred on the relationship of the self with others. For Marx, consciousness was essentially social in origin, substance and form; understandable only in terms of relations with other conscious selves.[[378]](#footnote-378)

In Marx’s own lifetime mechanistic modes of theorising had become dominant in both the human sciences, and the socialist movement. These types of theory tended towards explanations that reduced human behaviour to external causalities and ineluctable laws. Abstract determinism, empiricism, scientism and simplifying reductionism became ubiquitous. In Germany Gustav Fechner pioneered statistical approaches to understanding sensory perception and mental processes in the 1850s. In the early 1880s, laboratory studies in psychological research were introduced by Wilhelm Wundt. Empirical methods became established in studies of memory by Hermann Ebbinghaus; and later in studies of conditioning by Ivan Pavlov. Thus, modern psychology emerged as a scientific paradigm, with human behaviour as its object.

In the German workers movement, the most influential theorists of the Social Democratic Party promoted philosophies in which the role of human action in history was relegated beneath economic and political processes created by capitalism. An example of this was the notion of an Iron Law of Wages promulgated by Ferdinand Lasalle, the founder of German social democracy, by which the workers’ share of the profits of industry would always tend towards the lowest levels needed for the most basic sustenance. The fight for better wages by workers themselves therefore, through their trade unions was futile; only political work through legislative avenues by professional politicians would achieve meaningful social improvements. And for the most influential Marxists of German social democracy at this time, socialism was seen as emerging from developments in industry, the expansion of the factory form of production and the development of democratic forms of government. This optimistic faith in inevitable social improvement was informed often by the organic progressivism of Rudolph Virchow and the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer. Where the revolutionary moment was acknowledged as necessary, it was rendered in theory as one to be always delayed. Reflecting back upon his 1918 polemic with Lenin on this question, Karl Kautsky put it in the following way:

*The conflict between the two camps – the proletarians and the profit makers – became ever sharper. It was bound to culminate in a violent clash. But Social-Democracy had no reason to hasten a violent collision. Under the conditions prevailing it was growing in power from year to year. The number of proletarians grew faster than that of any other part of the population. And the influence of Social-Democracy on the proletariat was increasing in the same measure. The number of proletarians and Social-Democrats in the army also increased. And this army was less and less to be relied upon by the government in case of internal war.*

*It was vitally important for Social-Democracy not to disturb this state of affairs by a premature, violent collision with the government. It had to strive to postpone this collision as long as possible*.[[379]](#footnote-379)

The political philosophy of the Second International was that of the Scientific Socialism that had been distinguished from the utopias of the early socialists by Marx and Engels. For the leaders of German social democracy this meant that socialist consciousness itself could not come from the workers’ movement but would rather be the work of specialist theoreticians and expert historians; and was something that had to be introduced into the working-class movement from ‘the outside’. One measure of its dominance was that Lenin too shared this understanding of the relationship between the social experience of the working-class and the creation and incorporation of socialist ideas within it, though with a very different political consequence. Whereas for Kautsky it meant that capitalism would come to an end by the patient work of socialist legislators, for Lenin it meant that for socialist agitation and education to be effective on a mass scale the intervention of a revolutionary cadre was needed.[[380]](#footnote-380)

And on the ‘Revisionist’ political Right of German social democracy, Eduard Bernstein argued entirely against the revolutionary aspects of Marxism that were centred upon proletarian historical agency; instead also arguing for a perspective of incremental legislative steps towards a complete socialist society.[[381]](#footnote-381) In this quietist perspective, politically and industrially active workers were no longer needed for historical change; and were positioned as passive beneficiaries of state enacted social improvements.

By the mid-to-late 1930s, with the rise of Stalinism in Russia, and the final defeat of the revolutionary surge that followed the First World War, a different kind of deterministic philosophy of history became prevalent in the workers’ movements of most countries. Through the 1920s there had been fierce polemics inside Russia over philosophy, understandings of historical change and the scientific status of Marxism. In 1931 Stalin issued a decree declaring ‘dialectical materialism’ to be the official philosophy of ‘Marxist-Leninism’, to be taught on all university programmes in the Soviet Union, and across all curriculum areas. The very notion of an ‘official philosophy’ betrayed its ideological character, and this ‘dialectical materialist’ orthodoxy was full of appeals to purported ‘laws’ of nature and history that once more relegated the human subject to being only a product of those laws, as opposed to being an authentic agent of historical change. As Joseph Stalin was to express it in his *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* of 1938:

*… if it is not to err in policy, the party of the proletariat must both in drafting its program and in its practical activities proceed primarily from the laws of development of production, from the laws of economic development of society.*[[382]](#footnote-382)

In the Soviet Union and within the political milieus of communist parties around the world, the stultification and suppression of original thought, or even observations of reality that failed to support the pronouncements of ‘Marxism’, now used as a codified and rigid ideology, would produce extremes of improbability and absurdity during the height of Stalin’s power. In literature and art only those works that extolled the greatness of *Russian* achievements in science, technology and other areas of human endeavour were acceptable. DiaMat, a doxa of axiomatic speculative statements, purported to resolve all problems in philosophy. And in the natural sciences conformity with ‘Marxism’ was held up as a test of validity against ‘bourgeois science’, over which ‘proletarian science’ was always to triumph. In all these areas and more then, problems of theory and practical life had been resolved, and ‘truth’ established. Creative work and experimentation were condemned as unnecessary and indulgent diversions from the task of building Soviet society; and were highly risky for the individual. Nowhere was this more the case than in the areas of political life and inquiries into human behaviour. And the role of the worker was nothing more than to turn all their strength towards industrial success and the goals of ‘socialism’. During the High Stalinism of the 1940s and 1950s this was the meaning of Marxism in the communist world. [[383]](#footnote-383)

It was against this dogmatising and anti-humanistic intellectual atmosphere that a new generation of Marxist social theorists began to investigate once more the role of the active subject in history and the nature of the human self in political and social behaviour. These new theoretical strivings interweaved with the political experience of the 1930’s, and the revelations after World War 2 of the gulag and horrific political repression within the Soviet Union, as well as the violent suppression of workers’ risings such as those across East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956 and Novocherkassk, Russia in 1962. With each moment of disillusion, and each political shock, these left intellectuals recoiled from the failures of the ‘official Marxisms’ of their day and reached for new theoretical traditions to articulate their explorations of subjectivity; articulations they did not find in the Marxism with which they were familiar. Herbert Marcuse, for instance only began to engage with the ideas of Freud and psychoanalysis following the suppression of revolutionary struggle in Spain under Soviet foreign policy, and as revelations of the Moscow show-trials emerged.[[384]](#footnote-384)

Against the backdrop both of scientistic and reductionist conceptualisations of human consciousness, social behaviour and historical change, and of the disasters associated with bureaucratised forms of Marxism, the importance of the discovery of one of Marx’s most important texts on the question of human subjectivity – the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 - cannot be overstated. Published in 1932, these essays explored the human subject as a set of relationships - of self-with-self, and of self-with-others - thus creating the basis for a re-examination of the meaning of human subjectivity within Marxism and a renewed appreciation of Marx’s Hegelian intellectual roots. Along with this new engagement with Marx’s core concepts such as ‘alienation’, ‘fetishism’, *etc.,* and as we have seen, in the work of the key figures of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, Marxism was admixed with the work of theorists from outside of the world of Marxism; Freud’s work being only the most prominent.

The different phases of the theoretical interactions of Marxism and psychoanalysis have occurred in quite different historical periods, each with their own distinct social and political dynamics. However, the ways in which these two bodies of thought have interacted in the ideas and publications of their chief protagonists, have always been connected directly and indirectly to the struggles of their times.

The first important engagement with psychoanalysis by Marxists came with the wave of social emancipation that swept through Russia and the countries of its old empire, in the years immediately following the Revolution of October 1917. At that time psychoanalysis was taken seriously for its anti-bourgeois and emancipatory ideas, as much as for its clinical and educational potential.

By the later 1920s however theorists such as Eric Fromm became interested in the changing characteristics of the modern family in industrial society as a way of helping to understand the retreat of the revolutionary moment in Europe, and the emergence of Stalinism. In the 1930s, Wilhelm Reich had focused upon the repression of the sex drive in the German middle-class family to help explain the rise of Nazism.

We have already seen how in his 1941 book, *Escape From Freedom[[385]](#footnote-385)* Fromm, drawing upon his psycho-social empirical research in the 1920s, had centred his analysis of the rise of the Nazis on the personality types that had become widespread throughout German society. One dominant tendency according to Fromm, was that of ‘automaton conformity’, rooted in family structures in which the father figure was attenuated, diminished by their position in mass society. In similar fashion the Marxist psychoanalyst, Paul Federn pointed to the demise of social authority figures for the post-World War 1 generation, as a ‘parricide’, representing the ‘loss of the father’ within Austrian society, so making the population susceptible to the seductions of the ‘strong leader’ of the Fuhrer or of Il Capo. Both of these complementary analyses pointed to Freudian social-psychology above all as the principle explanation of the rise of the Nazism and fascism of the 1930s.

In the 1950s and 1960s a coincidence of revolts, liberation movements and cultural experimentation was accompanied by the opening up of new theoretical horizons within the New Left that emerged under their impact and influence. Anti-colonial movements for national liberation, urban riots by blacks and the poor in the major urban centre of the US, and the hippie, student and anti-war movements together created a new spirit of liberation. The official Marxism of the established pro-Moscow European communist parties did not connect to these developments, and at its worst stood in their way. The theoretical vacuum this represented came to be filled with new ideas from within a new Marxism that now borrowed from other ‘critical’ theories, psychoanalysis included.

It was in this political ferment that Marxism and psychoanalysis once again became entwined. Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* appeared first in 1955. By the time of its re-publication in 1966 it had become a key literary and political reference point in the emergent counterculture, as its message of a liberated Eros caught the imagination of a young generation rebelling against sexual repression, and rejecting the social conservatism and hypocrisies of their elders.

Marcuse was also a figure who connected the early phase of the North American counterculture and the interest in psychoanalysis within it, and the crises of Western Marxism at that time. His now largely forgotten text *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* - published just three years after *Eros and Civilisation* - illustrates this.[[386]](#footnote-386) In that text Marcuse identifies what he terms the ‘coexistence’ between the capitalist West and Soviet ‘socialism’ to frame his analysis of the politics, culture, and social values of Soviet society. Despite outward differences of political form, their interdependence meant that that a fundamental sameness existed between them in the ascendency of ‘technical rationality’ above human happiness, and the domination of the requirements of industrial production over any type of socially ethical culture or consideration of individual fulfilment.

*The world-historical co-existence of the two competing systems, which defines their political dynamic, also defines the social* function *of their ethics.*[[387]](#footnote-387)

If Marxism was to once more serve the authentic struggle for human freedom, it would have to be rescued from its bastardised form used now to cover the dreary repression of life under communism, not to mention the historical horrors of Stalinism.

The 1970’s, with the retreat once more of the revolutionary tide, again saw the importation of psychoanalytic concepts into Marxism, and the creation of entirely new syntheses. These were variously attempts to explain the continuation of capitalism following the revolutionary surges of the 1960s’, new theorisations of the possibilities for social emancipation, and alternatives to the overthrow of capitalism. The work of the most influential theorists in this vein - Louise Althusser, Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou, Cornelius Castoriadis, *etc*. – were all concerned in one way or another, whether considered positively or negatively, with the status of the subject in the historical process.

The 2000s and the 2010s saw the return of mass movements for liberation. The anti-globalisation movement that started with the Seattle protests in November 1999, and that led to the dramatic events of the anti-G8 protests at Genoa in 2001, the ‘Occupy!’ movement that flashed around the world after it began in 2011 in New York, and the democratic revolutions of the Arab Spring of the same year, all called for new theoretical perspectives for these eruptive movements. The vacuum was filled by the works of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000; 2004; 2009), that had drawn their inspiration from the anti-psychiatric works of Giles Deleuze Felix Guattari published in the 1970s and early 1980s. In their conceptual and political conclusions, and appeal to non-hierarchical and ‘rhizomic’ organisational forms of resistance, these latter strangely performative works were more ‘anti-Marx’ and ‘anti-Freud’ in their ‘atmosphere’ and evocative style. Nonetheless, they had grown from theoretical soil created by the encounter between Marxism and psychoanalysis, and the interplay of the critical contents of each.

The engagement of Marxism with psychoanalysis then, has been of two broad historical kinds. When revolt has been in the ascendance, Marxists have looked to the Freudian tradition for concepts of personal liberation. When reaction has become dominant, Marxists have looked in a different way to psychoanalysis, to make sense of and come to terms with, the ‘failure’ of the working class to achieve the expected revolution.

Each of these types of engagement begs questions about Marxism itself; or rather about the *kind* of Marxism influential in each of these historical epochs. Two historically dominant forms of Marxism have been: that of the great ‘Second International’ of which the German Social Democratic Party that came into electoral prominence after the lifting of the Anti-Socialist laws in 1890, and that represented ‘official Marxism’ for more than thirty years, was the most notable political formation; and that of the ‘Third International’ which by the late-1930s had come to represent the ‘high-Stalinism’ that signalled the end of the revolutionary opportunities of the first half of the Twentieth Century. Each of these were problematic for any consideration of individual psychology. The political philosophy of the Second International was one of gradual - but inevitable – progress towards socialism; a philosophy in which the individual had no essential role, given that socialism would come in its own time, *via* the state and without the necessary intervention of a historical subject. The individual *per se*, had no special role to play. The Third International by the late 1930s, rested upon a Stalinised Marxism (Marxist-Leninism) that was inhospitable to the idea that the individual (other than the figures of Lenin and Stalin himself of course), had any special role to play in the historical process. And the decline of Soviet psychoanalysis under the ideological strictures of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union saw the closing down of spaces for unfettered thinking in the psychological sciences.

Where mechanical forms of Marxism became the doxa of party teachings, whether of those of socialist reformism within the liberal democracies of Western Europe, or of the type of Soviet doctrinal orthodoxy, eclipsing any focus upon the subjective aspects of the historical process, there we can assume also that Marx would not have recognised the use of his own philosophy of history.

Taking this long view and considering the different and distinct phases of the theoretical interactions we have traced, the limitations and problems of these different types of Marxism gives us one way of interpreting their engagements with Freud’s legacy; the interest of the key protagonists being driven as much by the shortcomings of their particular brand of ‘Marxism’ as anything else. Within the Hegelian roots of Marx’s own thinking however, we have found the philosophical elements for a model of mind. Crucially, this is the dialectic-of-self, found within Hegel’s texts, rendered as a ‘social materialism’, enabled by the operative factor of ‘repression’ responding to real and perceived risks, and the challenges of survival for the person and social group in their natural and class-ridden social environment.

# Conclusion

This book has promoted a possibility; rather a hypothesis. The hypothesis is that the concept of repression, a central theoretical factor in the psychoanalytical tradition, is useful to a Marxist model-of-mind, helping to explain how a mode-of-mind emerges that is adapted to specific historical circumstances. The consequence is that the associated category of the unconscious must also be treated seriously within Marxism. This is not however, Freud’s libidinal unconscious. Rather it is a structural unconscious that precedes it analytically, and that makes it - and other iterations of ‘the unconscious’ - possible. The type of historical materialism that emerges, provides in turn a potentially fuller account of the dynamics of human subjectivity in the historical process.

However, it does something else in providing an account of how spontaneous feelings of identity, sense-of-self, gender, and so on, can be given without any appeal to biology, complex or otherwise. Correctly speaking, the stance here cannot be ‘Biology does not play any role in human behaviour’, in an unqualified sense. Such a non-empirical statement would be dogmatic and unscientific. It is rather that the use of biology – particularly dialectical biology - within Marxist discourses to explain for instance sexual identity, betrays the absence of a Marxist model-of-mind that is comparable in theoretical elaboration to that of Freud in his modelling of the human psyche. Moreover, the kind of object that is ‘mind’ (relational) is different to the kind that is ‘brain’ (discrete), meaning that the application of biology in causal explanations of specific social behaviours is an implausible proposition; involving also a logical fallacy.

However, revising the element of ‘repression’ taken from psychoanalysis enables a conceptualisation of social determination that is differentiated; so, enabling its application to feelings and aspects of mental life that are opaque in their origin even to the individual person themselves. These feelings and aspects may indeed be sexual; but they are not exclusively so, these being modes of the unconscious made possible by a non-libidinal structural repression that is more fundamental. The mechanisms of repression that make this basal structural unconscious possible are anthropological, belonging to all human cultures. The specific contents of this unconscious, including the introjected social determinations that are hidden from the person, but that shape their mental states, sexual desires, gender orientations, appetites and revulsions are historical, belonging to particular contextual settings. This way of modelling the mind provides a plausible alternative to biologistic assumptions used to ‘explain’ mental processes and human behaviour.

There are also political consequences to this emended form of historical materialism. One important and current example is that of the heated and sometimes hostile debate about self-determination and sexual identity. Whilst ‘gender’ might be acknowledged as something that the person can choose (male/female), ‘sex’ (man/woman) is a far more contested terrain, in which stubbornly biologist assumptions prevail. However, as we have described, the distinction between gender and sex is an unstable one. Sex then, understood as drive, attraction, coupling and so on (rather than anatomy), along with gender, has been described here as being socially constructed, albeit with social determinations that are obscure, and that emerge from otherwise hidden recesses of a repressed unconscious as libidinal desire. It also comes to be within mediating social formations such as the family. This means of course, that along with such social formations, it is a relativised phenomenon; and subject to historical change.

This approach to an understanding of sex and gender can equally well be applied to analyses of mental distress, and to forms of consciousness that pertain to given types of society. However, maintaining this position requires a model-of-mind of the kind that has been promoted here. Such a model must account not only for the means of the control of mental life and of appearance that Marx explains so compellingly, but also for the *mechanisms* by which the social factors that influence the development of the infant, the child, the adolescent, and the behaviour of the mature adult, become internalised as spontaneous feelings and social orientations. This is what the hypothesis that has been proposed - the general Marxist model-of-mind that can explain the historically specific mode-of-mind - attempts to do; standing as an alternative to the ‘biology-of-the-gaps’ where that is mobilised to suggest explanations for social behaviours that are otherwise difficult to understand.

Moreover, this model-of-mind involves a dialectic-of-self that emerges from a historical mode-of-consumption and its co-dependent mode-of-production. This dialectic-of-self orientates the person within their social group and environment, identifying *with* or *as* others as they develop. In that process they incorporate not only life perspectives, group identity, and social place, but also technical skills and knowledge. Also, in that process, repression ‘pushes down’ (or ‘out’) some life possibilities in favour of others in the interests of success and survival. The result of this repression is that social determinations, having entered the mental structure of the person, become obscure to the person themselves, and experienced as ‘natural’. This also represents a ‘social-materialism’ that operates as a third term between the individual and determinations at the larger historical scale.

And finally, sex has a special role to play, in that after a period of childhood preparation, much of this happens ‘all-at-once’ at the stage of puberty and becomes entwined with the gendering processes of early adolescence as the individual begins to take up their place in their social group. So, this general model-of-mind, itself an aspect of our ‘general capacity’ of mind, allows for the emergence of historical *modes*-of-mind that explain the particular social behaviours that characterise a particular type of society at a given historical juncture. In this hypothesis, biology plays no role beyond the general capacity it provides; it does not explain anything specific.

Ever since its emergence, whether seen as a purported science of humanity, or as a cultural movement, there have been Marxists who have allowed a space for psychoanalysis. The commitment to reaching into the deepest recesses of the mind, and the intolerance of the deceits and hypocrisies of bourgeois sentimentality about sex, the mind and the individual associated with psychoanalysis, have always attracted the attention of some from within the Marxist tradition. The motivations have always reflected their times. So, when the movement for social liberation and revolution has been on the rise, the appeal of psychoanalysis has been the emancipatory potential it appears to possess. When reaction has been in the ascendant, elements in the Marxist camp have looked to psychoanalysis for explanations they have struggled to find elsewhere. Usually this has also revealed distortions and shortcomings in the historical versions of Marxism that were politically dominant during much of the Twentieth Century,

The concerns that have motivated the engagement with the ideas and legacy of Freud here have been connected to the intense contemporary debate around gender and self-identification, controversies about the nature of mental illness, and the misapplication of ‘dialectical biology’ in explanations of human behaviour. The element of repression that is potentially useful for Marxism is now shorn of its libidinal - and so Freudian - connotations, just as with the notion of the unconscious itself. It is repression then, as an organising psychical mechanism, that sustains the dialectic between the model-of-mind enabling our creative, innovative and productive potential, and the mode-of-mind that is the historical realisation of that potential in any given time and place. And it is the structural unconscious it creates that holds the inward mysteries of the self, understood now as entirely social in origin, whilst also in part at least, opaque to the person themselves. These recesses are the social determinations, the external social origins of which are lost from consciousness, known only as ‘always there’ by the person, and experienced as natural.

In all of this, it is not any ‘already present’ pre-social principle that makes us what we are in any specific cultural sense. Rather it is our *social* being – and our social being *only* - that explains our experience; that is the Alpha and Omega of being human, and the source of our potential liberation.

**Freud – key texts – check uses of for accuracy**

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1. Popper, K. (1962) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Well known examples include: Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1970); Germain Greer’s *The Female Eunuch* (1970); Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970); and Eva Figes, *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Rush, Florence (1980), *The Best Kept Secret. The Sexual Abuse of Children*, McGraw-Hill. Also, Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff, *The Assault on Truth: Freud’s Suppression of the Seduction Theory*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The 1974 *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, published by The Hogarth Press runs to 24 volumes. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Paul Robinson in his book *Freud and His Critics* (XXXX) puts it well when he says “Like it or not, Freud virtually invented a new way of thinking about the self.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Other key figures in this movement are Richard Lewin, Richard Levins, Steven Rose and Leon Kamin, whose collaborations are commented upon in Part II. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A term coined by Gilbert Ryle in his characterisation of Descartes’ philosophy of mind. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This account is based upon Chapters B (IV), and C (V, VI and VII) of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit (Mind)* (Pantianos Classics, 2016; 2018), and Chapters C (I and II) of his *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (Continuum, 1990). The ‘dialectic-of-self’ contained in these passages, and the leaning towards realism in the move from subjective to objective spirit, will be discussed in Part II. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Hume, D., (1758; 2007), *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford University Press. Pp. 12-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hume, D., (1740; 1969), *A Treatise of Human Nature. Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects*, Penguin, Pp. 57-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Place, U., (1956), ‘Is consciousness a brain process?’, *British Journal of Psychology* 47. Pp. 44–50 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The ideological and repressive character of Skinner’s ‘materialism’, and his programme ‘behavioural modification’, is discussed in Jacoby, R. (1997), *Social Amnesia*. *A Critique of Contemporary Psychology*. Transaction. Pp. 70-71 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Dennett, D. (1991), *Consciousness Explained*, Back Bay Books. Pp. 110-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Saint Augustine, (1961), *Confessions*, Penguin. P. 212 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Jackson, F., (1982), ‘Epiphenomenal Qualia’, *Philosophical Quarterly*, 32. Pp. 127-136 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Dennett, D. (1991). Pp. 398-401 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. What counts as ‘discoveries’ in Freud’s work varies across different commentaries. Along with those already mentioned we could also add: repression and the roots of morality in the suppression of early experiences (Reich, W. (1997), *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Souvenir Press. Pp. 26-27.); the relevance of the suppression of sexual urges to woman’s oppression (Schneider, M. (1974), *Neurosis and Civilization. A Marxist/Freudian Synthesis,* Seabury Press. P21-22); and the ubiquity of neurosis, as well as the historical character of ‘the self’ (Callinicos, A. (1999), *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction*, London, Polity. Pp. 190-91) [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Marx, K (1859) [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Fromm, Erich (1980), *Beyond the Chains of Illusion. My Encounter with Marx and Freud*. Abacus. P. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Fromm, Erich (1980). P.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. This case is put by Paul Ricœur in his 1970 publication *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven, Yale. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Hegel, G. W. F. (1977), Chapter IV, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Freud, S. (1933; 1966), ‘Lecture XXXV. The question of a Weltanschauung’ in *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Norton. P.623 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1976), *The German Ideology* in *Collected Works*; volume 5. Moscow: Progress Publishers. P.34 [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The term ‘charaktermaske’, in fact appears as late as the first volume of Marx’s *Capital*, published in 1867. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Marx, K. (XXXX), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte*. P.YY [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Freud, S. (1966), ‘Lecture XXXI. The Dissection of the Psychical Personality’, in *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Norton. P.533 [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Freud, S. (1966), ‘Lecture XXII. Some Thoughts on Development and Regression - Aetiology’, in *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Norton. P.352 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Marx. K. (XXXX), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, YYYY, P.Z [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Freud, S., (XXXX), *The Essays On The Theory Of Sexuality*, P.YYY [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Schneider, M. (1974), *Neurosis and Civilization. A Marxist/Freudian Synthesis,* Seabury Press. P25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Richard Lewontin in his *The Triple Helix*. *Gene, organism and environment* (2000), points out that metaphors for the mind have always been drawn from the most advanced technological developments of the time *viz.* the telephone switchboard, the hologram, the digital computer, the parallel processing computer, and the distributed processing computer (Lewontin, R., 2000; 74-5)*.* Stephen Rose make this point also in his *The Making of Memory* (2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Freud, S. (1912; 1974), *Types of Onset of Neurosis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud* (*CWSF*), volume 12, pp. 227-238. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Freud, S. (1920; 1974), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *CWSF*, volume 18, pp. 50-52. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Freud, S. (1923; 1975), *The Ego and the Id*, *CWSF*, volume 19, pp. 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Freud. S., (1909; 1975), *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, *CWSF*, volume 10, pp. 231-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Freud, S. (1917; 1975), *On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Eroticism*, *CWSF*, volume 17, pp. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. For an admirably concise explanation of the various forms of metaphysical idealism see Sprigge, T. (2005), ‘Idealism’, *The Shorter Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Routledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Reference [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Lichtman, R. (1986), *The Production of Desire. The Integration of Psychoanalysis into Marxist Theory*. The Free Press. MacMillan. P. 260. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Roheim, G. (1925; 1971), *Australian Totemism: A Psycho-Analytic Study in Anthropology*, Routledge. Rohiem was not explicitly political beyond his fierce opposition to the bourgeois nuclear family structure, reducing all social and economic phenomena to psychological categories. Indeed, his framing of pre-modern - albeit non-repressed - societies as ‘primitive’, typical of the anthropology of this era, makes for uncomfortable reading today. For a discussion of Roheim’s work see Robinson, P. (1970), *The Sexual Radicals*, Temple Smith. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. The radical intellectual life of the Berlin Psychoanalytical Institute, and its contrast to the more conservative scene at Vienna around Freud himself, is discussed in Jacoby, R., (1983), *The Repression of Psychoanalysis. Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians*, Basic Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Jacoby, R., (1983), *The Repression of Psychoanalysis. Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians*, Basic Books. Pp. 21-27 [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Roberts, R. (2015), *Psychology and Capitalism. The Manipulation of Mind*. Zero Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Ferguson, Iain, (2017), *Politics of the Mind. Marxism and Mental Distress*, Bookmarks. P. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Jacoby, R., (1983), *The Repression of Psychoanalysis. Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians*, Basic Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. The historical attempts at synthesis between Marx and Freud will be explored more fully in Part III. So also, will be the political interactions between the two traditions of thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Vološinov, V (1926;1976) [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Freud, S. (XXXX), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, P.YYYY [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Lichtman, R. (1986), *The Production of Desire. The Integration of Psychoanalysis into Marxist Theory*. The Free Press. MacMillan. Pp. 42-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Marx, K. (XXXX), *The German Ideology in* Collected Works, Volume 5. P.53 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Freud, S. (1966), ‘Lecture XXXIV. Explanations, Applications and Orientations’, in *The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Norton. P.611 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. For a discussion of Freud in relation to John Stuart Mill see Roazen, P. (2000), pp. 1-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Freud does attempt to explain group identity in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) by an adaptation of his theoretical model. His explanation relies on the power of the super-ego becoming reduced by the libidinal bonds that hold the mass together, allowing the unconscious a free reign where normally its drives and appetites would be curtailed. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Marx, K. (1973), *The Grundrisse*. Penguin. P.84 [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. This constant and ‘given’ *i.e.* biological status of the id has been noted as a positive feature of the human condition by Lionel Trilling (1967). In this view the id, standing ‘outside culture’, is a realm that cannot be manipulated or controlled by it; representing then a residue of hope in an otherwise spiritually desolate world. Trilling here also observes Freud’s ambivalent assessment of culture generally, as something that the self is set against, “having been from the first reluctant to enter it.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Reference [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Freud, S. (1913; 1919), *Totem and Taboo*, Brill. *P.XX* [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Freud, S. (1913; 1919), *Totem and Taboo*, Brill. P.324 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Engels, F. (XXXX), ‘The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man’ in *The Dialectics of Nature*. XXXXX. P.YYY [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Freud actually uses the term ‘instinct’ (‘instinkt’) very rarely, precisely because of its biologistic overtones. The term he uses throughout *The Instincts and their* *Vicissitudes* is ‘drive’ (‘trieb’) with a meaning closer to ‘desire’, cathected to an object-of-desire that it pursues. The rendering of ‘trieb’ as ‘instinct’ was the decision of Freud’s translator, James Strachey. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Freud, S. (1915; 121-122) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Freud’s flight into speculative biology and a type of cosmology caused consternation amongst even his most devoted followers, making *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* probably his most controversial theoretical work. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Freud, S. (1924). ‘The Economic Problem of Masochism’ in *The Ego and the Id and Other Works.* The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 19 (1923-1925). P. 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Reference [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Karl Marx (2007), *“Capital: A Critique of Political Economy - The Process of Capitalist Production”, p.198* [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Marx, K. (1977), ‘The General Relation of Production to Distribution, Exchange and Consumption’ in *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*. Penguin Books. Pp. 88-94 [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Marx, K., (1977). P. 92 [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Freud’s observations of the nervous tissue of lamprey eels are cited in the historically important paper by Cajal on the synapse. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Freud to Fliess, May 25, 1895, p. 129 in Bonaparte, M., Freud, A., and Kris, E. (Eds.), *The origins of psycho-analysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess, drafts and notes, 1887-1902*, (James Strachey, Trans.), London: Imago, 1954. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. ‘Hysteria’ is a long-discredited term of Victorian medicine, used to describe a host of symptoms in mentally ill women that are now regarded as resulting from a range of quite different medical and psychological causes. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. The ‘Anna O’ of this case was Bertha Pappenheim, who would go on to become influential in social work theory and practice as well as a noted feminist. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Freud, S. (1899; 1991), *The Interpretation of Dreams,* Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991. P. 463. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Breuer, J. and Freud, S. (1895), *Studies on Hysteria*. The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume 2. London. Hogarth Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Freud, S. (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams*. TheComplete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 5. P. 608. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Freud, S. (1895), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume 6. London. Hogarth Press. P.275, n. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Freud, S. (1989), *The Unconscious,* in Gay, P. (ed.) *The Freud Reader*, Norton. Pp. 576-77. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Freud, S. (1911), *Formulations on the* ***Two Principles*** *of* ***Mental Functioning*.** The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works, 213-**226**. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Freud, S. (1911). *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning.* The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 12 (1911-1915 [1914]). P. 222. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Freud, S. (1905), *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex,* … [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Freud, S. (1905). *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 7. P. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Freud, S. (1899), *The Interpretation of Dreams*, xxxxxx, Chapter 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. In his 1940 essay ‘Freud and Literature’ (republished in 1947 and 1950) the literary critic Lionel Trilling noted this Freudian formulation as representing a ‘mithridatizing’ phenomena in literature. This term, an essentially homeopathic one, refers to the repeated return to pain and trauma to create an anaesthetising effect for a character. Examples, Trilling explains, are found in Greek and Shakespearian tragedies. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Freud, S. (1933). ‘The Dissection of the Psychical Personality’ in *The New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (Lecture XXXI). The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 22. P. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Freud, S. (1926), *The Question of Lay Analysis*. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX (1925-1926). P.222 [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. This was the basis of the ‘word-association’ technique employed by Freud in his practice with patients. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. With this polemic Lenin was dismembering a theoretical rival to Marxism within Russian social democracy, clearing the way for Marxist education and propaganda within the workers movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Lenin, V., (1972), *Materialism and Empirio-criticism. Critical Comments on a Reactionary Philosophy.* Foreign Languages Press [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Lenin, V. (1972), p. 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Lenin, V. (1972), p. 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Lenin, V. (1972), p. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Franck, Adolphe (1875), *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques,* Paris. Cited by Lenin. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Lenin was to revise his philosophical position in his *Philosophical Notebooks* of 1916, a series of reflections written over 20 years, but crucially including papers written between 1914-1916, that were heavily influenced by his reading of Hegel. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Pannekoek, A. (1938), *Lenin as Philosopher*, Amsterdam. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. In fact, Pannekoek’s phrase is ‘middle-class materialism’. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Pannekoek provides a full account of this distinction in his *Materialism and Historical Materialism* of 1942. In that work, rejecting the notion that Marxism is concerned with a ‘matter-mind antithesis’, he says: *“The axiom of materialism, that the mental is determined by the material world, has therefore entirely different meanings for the two doctrines. For bourgeois materialism it means that ideas are products of the brain, of the structure and composition of the brain substance, in the last instance, of the dynamics of the atoms of the brain. For historical materialism it means that the ideas of man are determined by his social environment. Society is his environment which acts upon him through his sense organs.”* (Pannekoek, A. 1942, New Essays, Vol. VI, No. 2 Fall 1942). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. This is a theme that runs through all of Pannekoek’s philosophical writings. As early as 1907, in his essay *Socialism and Religion*, citing the Marxist philosopher Joseph Dietzgen, he writes: *“Our conception of things true and real is derived from our experience in the world, our conception of things good and holy from our needs. But these mental reflections are not mere mirrored pictures, which reproduce the object exactly as it is, while the mind plays a purely passive role. No, the mind transforms everything, which it assimilates. Out of the impressions and feelings, by which the material world exerts an influence upon it, it makes mental conceptions and assumptions.”* International Socialist Review, April 1907. In his *Society and Mind in Marxian Philosophy* of 1937, he emphasis the social character of mind against those who would hold to the notion of innate ideas (Pannekoek, A., 1937, Science and Society, no. 4. Summer). [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Although not published until after his death, by Engels in 1888. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. A classic work of anti-religious humanism published by Ludwig Feuerbach in 1841, that had profound influence upon Marx and Engels. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Reference [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Lukács, G. (2000), *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic,* Verso. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Vygotsky, L., (1934; 2012), *Thought and Language*, Martino Publishing. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. In his *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (1830), Hegel posits an ‘immediate unity’ between ‘subjective spirit’ (psyche) and ‘objective spirit’ (orientation towards the world). [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. O’Brien, M. (2000), 'A Comment on Tailism and the Dialectic', *International Socialism* 2:89, Winter. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. This is comparable to the ‘*hyle*’ in Husserl’s phenomenology, by which meaning is attributed to intentional acts by sensory mental processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Vygotsky, L., (1934; 2012), ‘An Experimental Study of Concept Formation’ in *Thought and Language*, Martino Publishing. Chapter 5. Pp. 52-81 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Vygotsky, L., (1934; 2012), Pp. 80-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. A fascinating example of ‘wordless’ (non-verbal) meaning in enculturation and behavioural habituation is provided by Maurice Bloch in his account of the reproduction of kinship patterns in Zafimaniry communities. Bloch, M. (1998), Pp. 47-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. # Here we can note Freud’s perspectives on theatre, and particularly the character of Hamlet, in his discussion of the pleasure the audience finds in the partial release of repressed desire within the safe confines of ‘the play’, in his 1906 essay ‘Psychopathic Characters on the Stage’. Freud, S. (1960), pp. 144-148. Focusing upon stage performance *per se*, Otto Fenichel applies the similar principle of ‘partial instinct’ in his analysis of the actor’s motivations as unresolved infantile exhibitionism in his 1952 essay ‘On the Psychology of Acting’. Fenichel, O. (1960), pp. 459-464.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. For an illuminating discussion of Jameson’s use of historical ‘totality’ see Callinicos, A. (1989). [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Jameseon, F., (1983) [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. We should note here the intensely sexualised culture that characterised life in Vienna in the years that straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; with very high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, ubiquitous prostitution and sexual crimes. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Jameson, F. (1984; 1992) [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. In the third part of his triadic *Philosophy of Subjective Spirit* (in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences in Outline*of 1830), Hegel provides a psychology structured in the following way: Theoretical spirit, comprising ‘intuition’, ‘representation’, ‘recollection’, ‘imagination’, ‘memory’, ‘thinking’; and Practical spirit comprising ‘practical feeling’, ‘drives and wilfulness’, ‘happiness’ and ‘free spirit’. Marx was familiar with Hegel’s psychology. Ikäheimo, H., (2016), ‘Hegel’s Psychology’ in Moyar, D. (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Hegel,* Oxford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Marx, K. (1844; 1970) *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Henceforth referred to as *The Critique of 1844*. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Marx, K. (1844; 1970). P. 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Marx, K. (1844; 1970). Pp. 8-9 [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Marx, K. (1844; 1970). P. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Marx, K. (XXXX), *The (Critique of the) German Ideology*. P. Y [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Marx, K. (XXXX), *The (Critique of the) German Ideology*. P. Y [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Labriola, A. (1896: XXXX), *Essays on the Materialistic Conception of History.* [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Other key works of this period include *The Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* of 1843 and *The Poverty of Philosophy* of 1847. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Reference [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Marx, K. (1861-63; 1994), 'Economic Manuscript of 1861-63 (Conclusion): A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy'. In *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 34. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Pp. 457-58 [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Marx, K., (1990). *Capital*. London: Penguin. P.165. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. XXXXXXXX [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Horkheimer, M. and Adorno, T. (1997). P. 186-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Whitebook, J., (2008) [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. The similarities between Sohn-Rethal’s account of the origins of human subjectivity, and that of the psychologist George Herbert Mead, are discussed in Granberg, M. (2019) ‘Objective meaning: The formation of self in Mead and Sohn-Rethel’, *Acta Sociologica* 62(1). Granberg identifies the key point of difference between the two theorists in the place of departure to which consciousness returns, with Mead identifying this return with the *un*hidden social meanings that arise from inter-subjective processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. The role of rupture between formal institutional pedagogy and the social and cultural pedagogy in which it is situated as a cause of social revolt, is discussed by István Mészáros in his *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*, (1970), Chapter X. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. There is an echo here of Vygotsky’s theory of a zone of proximal development (ZPD) created by the adult for the child to develop through and into. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Bertram, G. W., (2020) [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. An objection to this position is that the mind can do nothing beyond ‘natural constraints’. (See *e.g.* Moll, I. (1991), ‘The Material and the Social in Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development’: [ERIC - ED352186 - The Material and the Social in Vygotsky's Theory of Cognitive Development., 1991-Apr-18](https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED352186). This is a different way of saying that the mind exists as mental activity within the brain, and expresses a resistance to a perceived drift into idealism. The hypothesis here is that the possibilities of the mind, rooted in the brain’s capacity for reconfiguration of its own ‘rules of thought’, allows concept formation to exceed the limitations of the materially possible. It is not a concession to idealism. Rather it is an aspect of materialism, properly understood. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Gruner. R., (1977: 36) [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Ladrièr, J.(1977) [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Reference Lucien Lévi-Bruhl – the ‘participation mystique’ [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. This shift predates by approximately 30,000 years, the rapid rate of settlement that characterised the Neolithic Revolution of Gordon Childe’s periodisation in his 1936 book, *Man Makes Himself*. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Lewis-Williams, D. (2012), *The Mind in the Cave*, Thames and Hudson. P.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Lewis-Williams (2012), places great explanatory significance on the abstract fixed-shape patterns that appear in the Palaeolithic record. He connects this with accounts of hallucinatory experiences under the influence of psychotropic drugs and intense ritual. His discussion is resonant with Karl Jung’s notion of recurring archetypes in myth and religion, and this is indeed where Lewis-Williams’ focus upon shamanism as a means by which to understand parietal art comes into focus. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Imaginary entities, half-human, half-animal. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Mithen, S. (1996), *The Prehistory of the Mind. A Search for the Origins of Art, Religion and Science*, Thames and Hudson. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Such modelling is compatible with Noam Chomsky’s theory of rapid language acquisition based upon linguistic capacity being ‘hard-wired’ into the brain. Whilst the neuronal pathways that have evolved may represent a biological constant, the ‘Universal Grammar’ they create makes possible the huge variety of languages that we see today. There is also a point of similarity here with the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss and his studies of cultural variety across the tribes of the Brazilian rainforests. So, whilst binary-oppositions such as ‘raw-cooked’ created a common underlying script that connected all the tribes, this nonetheless created the basis for a huge range of outward cultural forms. Furthermore, this variety reflected the range of different solutions – such as those found in meat-eating tribes as opposed to plant-eating tribes - to the same challenges of survival in a dangerous natural environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. The overthrow of this Hegelian notion is the point upon which Marx’s materialism turns, in his discussion of it in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Vygotsky, L. (1930), paragraph 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. A neurochemical model for this possibility is discussed in Parrington, J. (2021), *Mind Shift. How Culture Transformed the Human Brain*, Oxford. Pp. 178-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. The notion of ‘the unconscious’ as an entity, having properties, modes of action, and so on, along with that of ‘the idea’, is considered a strange one by Alisdair MacIntyre in his 1958 essay *The Unconscious. A Conceptual Analysis*. There, he considers the status of the unconscious rather as an unobservable hypothesis, though one that ultimately lacks explanatory power, unable to create testable propositions, unlike more definitely scientific hypotheses such as that of ‘the electron’. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Skinner, B. F. (1972), *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, Penguin. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Skinner, B. F. (1972). P. 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Worth mentioning here is the reported argument between Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, in which Jung compared Freud’s sex theory to attempting to explain the Notre Dame cathedral by studying the chemistry of the stones it is built from. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Parrington, J. (2021), *Mind Shift. How Culture Transformed the Human Brain*, Oxford. Pp. 68-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. Parrington, J. (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Parrington, J. (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. A similar view is presented in Parrington (2021: 412), though focused particularly on the evolution of the brain of *H. s. sapiens* from its hominid precursors, and influenced by the Vygotskian theory of tool-based cultural mediation. Indeed, within the Vygotskian theoretical tradition there have been some who have argued for this type of ‘deep’ cultural mediation *e.g.* van der Veer, R. and van Ijzendoorn, M. (1985), ‘Vygotsky's theory of the higher psychological processes: some criticisms’, *Human Development*. Vol. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Engels, F. (1884), *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*, in Collected Works, volume. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Engels, F. (1894; 1975), ‘Afterword’ to *On Social Relations in Russia*, in *Collected Works*, volume. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. The historical variability required of the mode-of-mind should be considered in the light of Marx’s own wide-ranging ethnological studies of the various developmental paths leading out of the ‘primitive accumulation’ stage of human society, to different kinds of class society. See Patterson, T. (2009), *Karl Marx, Anthropologist*. Berg. Pp. 119-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Marx, K. (1976) [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Kolakowski, L. (2005), *Main Currents of Marxism*, Norton. P.327-325 [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. A naturalising tendency in theorisations of nature is also evident in Alfred Schmidt’s 1962 *The Concept of Nature in Marx*. After a lucid account of the consequences of the capitalist form of production for the destruction of nature, Schmidt proffers a picture of progressive technical mastery over nature, and the *subordination* of nature under socialism, revealing an affinity on this question with the ‘official Marxism’ of the Soviet Union. Burkett, P. (1997). [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. Marx, K. Capital Volume 1, quoted in Foster (1999) [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. This process in the development of western capitalism had its state capitalist equivalent in the Soviet Union of the 1940s under Stalin’s Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Geras, N (1983), *Marx and Human Nature. The Refutation of a Legend*. Verso [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. The role of ‘the biological’ as a physical constraint upon human activity is considered for its ethical implications by Callinicos, A., (2006: 184-5) in his discussion of Margaret Archer’s recognition of this factor for human morality. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. The constantly deepening involvement of technology in all areas of human life, as well as the ever-expanding reach of human industry of course gives ‘nature’ a relative aspect. Nonetheless, the absolute limit to this, in the fundamental character of reality itself, must stand if we are not to indeed become alchemists ourselves. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Patterson, T. (2009), pp.15-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Patterson, T. (2009), p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. In recent decades, scientific leaps in soft tissue DNA analysis and forensic archaeology, and advances in archaeobiology and biological anthropology have yielded ever more detail about the evolution of body form, anatomy, diet and metabolism of hominids and early humans. This growing pre-historical evolutionary evidence offers crucial insights into the development of human technical capability, the origins of the modern human brain and the capacity for sociality in the first human groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01a.htm> (History: Fundamental Conditions) [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Lorenz is cited in full knowledge of the shocking revelations that were published at the time of his award of the Nobel Prize, about his involvement in the war-time Nazi regime. Lorenz was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1973 with Karl von Frisch and Nikolaas Tinbergen. He is referred to here because of the enormous influence he had in the post-War era in the field of ethology, the study of animal behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Lorenz, K. (1972), *On Aggression*, Methuen. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. *“But, to suppress the appetite, I deem  
     Impossible; the stomach is a source  
     Of ills to man, an avaricious gulph  
     Destructive, which to satiate, ships are rigg’d,  
     Seas travers’d, and fierce battles waged remote.”*

     Eumæus to Ulysses, Homer, *The Illiad*. Book 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. This interpretation is influenced by the account of language provided by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his late work, *Philosophical Investigations*. In this account, ‘the word’ is part of a ‘language game’; derived always from its social context. Wittgenstein should not be read as a behaviourist in this regard, since what he denies is ‘private language’, not interior language or ‘self’. The fact of internal language and its meaning is not in question, rather its origin. Wittgenstein, L., (1998), *Philosophical Investigations*, Wiley-Blackwell. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Geras, N. (1985). P. 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Lewontin, R. and Lewin, R. (2009), *The Dialectical Biologist*, Aakar Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Lewontin, R. and Lewin, R. (2009). Pp. 286-288 [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Lewontin, R. (2000), pp. 48-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. This ‘constructionist’ view of evolution was the target of attack by Daniel Dennett in his 1995 book *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*. There Dennett defended a highly reductionist philosophical view of evolution based upon an algorithmic understanding of natural selection as the basis of human consciousness, meaning and morality. Dennett, D. (1996), *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea. Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, Penguin. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Rose, S., Lewontin, R. C. and Kamin, L. (1984), *Not in Our Genes. Biology, Ideology and Human Nature*, Penguin Books. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. A particular target of the critique was the eminent Harvard entomologist Edward O. Wilson, under whom Richard Lewontin had studied at Harvard University. Wilson’s 1979 publishing sensation, *Sociobiology, the New Synthesis*, in its 27th chapter had put forward a highly reductionist and genetic-determinist view of all aspects of human social behaviour. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. This point is acknowledged by Lewontin and Lewin (2009), p.70. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. This differential understanding of change in nature, and the notion of rates of variability, was appreciated by Marx. Patterson, T. (2009), p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. Rose *et al*. (1984). P. 276 [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Lewontin, R. (1991), *The Doctrine of DNA. Biology as Ideology*, HarperPerrenial. P.128. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Lewontin, R. and Levins, R. (2007), ‘The Biological and the social’ in *Biology Under the Influence. Dialectical Essays on Ecology, Agriculture and Health*, Monthly Review Press. P. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Lewontin, R. and Levins, R. (2007), p.36. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Ferguson, I. (2017), *Politics of the Mind. Marxism and Mental Distress*, Bookmarks. Pp. 42-46. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Roberts, R. (2015), *Psychology and Capitalism. The Manipulation of Mind*, Zero Books. P. 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Roberts, R. (2015), Pp. 40-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Bentall, R. (2010), *Doctoring the Mind. Why psychiatric treatments fail*, Penguin. Pp. 152-165. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Bentall, R. (2004), *Madness Explained. Psychosis and human nature*, Penguin. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Bentall, R. (2010), *Doctoring the Mind. Why psychiatric treatments fail*, Penguin. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Lichtman, R. (1986), Pp. 256-275. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. See the discussion of feminist critiques of Marx on this question in Brown, H. (2012), *Marx on Gender and the Family,* Haymarket. Pp. 11-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. Marx, K. ‘Estranged Labour’ in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts.* [Estranged Labour, Marx, 1844 (marxists.org)](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm) (accessed 2/72021) [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. Marx. K. (2007), *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Dover Publications. P. 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. Freud, S. (1910), ‘A Special Type of Choice of Object made by Men (Contributions to the Psychology of Love I)’, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XI (1910): Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works. Pp. 163-176. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Butler, J. (2006), *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Femininity*, Routledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. Butler, J. (2007), p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Butler also explores the theorisation of ‘woman’ as ‘natural’ - meaning ‘of nature’, and not ‘of culture’ - in the work of Luce Irigaray who, in their critique of Lacanian psychoanalysis, highlights the positioning of ‘the feminine’ outside of Lacan’s Symbolic register, leaving ‘the masculine’ as the sole bearer of culture and universal representation. Irigaray, L. (1985), *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. See also Butler, (1988), “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” [[Document2 (mariabuszek.com)](http://mariabuszek.com/mariabuszek/kcai/PoMoSeminar/Readings/BtlrPerfActs.pdf)] [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. This type of pansexual behaviour is famously evident in Bonobo chimps, and is seen in other primate species. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. This is not to suggest that this early form of gendering was necessarily associated with structural oppression. There are many evidenced examples of tribal societies in which gender-fluidity was accepted, and seen as positive within the norms and culture of the group. See Miles, L. (2020), *Transgender Resistance. Socialism and the fight for trans liberation*, Bookmarks. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. The kinship rites of clan-based and tribal societies that provided the empirical substance of the structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss are important examples of this exogamous heterosexuality See Levi-Strauss, C. (1994), [*The Savage Mind (Nature of Human Society)*](https://biblio.co.uk/the-savage-mind-by-lvi-strauss-claude/work/2439881), Weidenfeld and Nicolson. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. The positioning of puberty-rituals as mechanisms of socialisation, following the pioneering work of Bronislaw Malinowski amongst the Trobriand islanders, was contradicted by Bruno Bettleheim in his 1954 publication, *Symbolic Wounds. Puberty Rites and the Envious Male.* In that book Bettleheim theorises a mutual envy between the male and female adolescents, the puberty rite becoming then a resolution of the resultant tensions for the young male and female, and an establishment of the sexed-egos of both. Bettleheim, B. (1962). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Lewis-Williams, D. (2012), p.40. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. The splitting of gender here brings to mind the wonderful tale of Aristophanes in Plato’s *The Symposium*. Here, Zeus splits in two the rolling bi-sexual spheres that constituted humanity, casting them forever asunder from one another, leaving them destined to roam through life in search of their lost other halves. This story is also cited by Freud in his *The Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1972), *The Social Construction of Society*, Penguin [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Marx, K. (1972), *Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, ed. Krader, L., Assen. Van Gorcum. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. The varied Celtic tribes of Western Europe in the pre-Roman era included the Iberian, Gallic, Anatolian, Alpine, Briton and Hibernian. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Brown, H. (2012), Pp. 177-209 [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Brown, H. (2012), Pp. 173-175 [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. Within modern anthropology the matter of the place of women in Celtic societies is contested, and a strong current of opinion holds that any notion of an *emancipated* status for women represents an idealisation of these societies. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Indeed even between the Greek city-states, contrasts can be made, for example between the oppressed position of women in Athenian society, and the more socially and economically (though not politically) equal position of women to men in Spartan society. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Lewis Henry Morgan identified five type of family types in his anthropological studies: consanguine (based upon group-marriage within the clan); punaluan (based upon marriage outside of the clan, but also involving sibling relationships); syndyasmian (based upon coupled-marriages, but without exclusive sexual relations); patriarchal (one man having many wives, and having lordly domination); monogamian (based upon coupled-marriages, and with exclusive sexual relations). [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Durant, W. (1966), *The Life of Greece (Book 2),* Simon and Schuster. Pp.305-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. A speculation found in Durant, W. (1966), p.302. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Durant, W. (1966), *Caesar and Christ (Book 1),* Simon and Schuster. P. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Miles (2020), p.26. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. Gibbon, E. (1987), *Justinian and Roman Law, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Volume V.* Pp. 276-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. E. A. Hemelrijk (2015), *Hidden Lives, Public Personae: Women and Civic Life in the Roman West*. Oxford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. Brown, H. (2012), pp. 160-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. This idea captures some of the meaning of the ‘Not yet conscious’ of the phenomenology of Ernst Bloch in his *The Principle of Hope* (1955). It is also different from Bloch’s category however, insofar as its content is that of collective and historical memory. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. Rosenthal, b., g. (1993), ‘Marxism and Spirituality: The Debate in Early Twentieth-Century Russia’ in Page, B. B. (1993), *Marxism and Spirituality: An International Anthology, Bergin and Garvey*. P. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. Kolakowski, L. (2005), *Main Currents of Marxism*, Norton. P.825. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. # Kon. I. (1995), *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: Sexual Politics from the Age of the Czars to Today*, The Free Press. P. 52.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Healey, D. (2001), *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia*, University of Chicago Press. P. 120. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. # This is a theme explored by Eric Naiman (1997), tracing as he does the sexualised discursive patterns that inscribed the texts of contemporary literature and popular culture of the 1920s. Naiman, E. (1997), *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology*, Princeton University Press.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. The ‘sexual release’ of the professional classes in Russia, with the emergence of political tolerance and democratic sentiment is the subject of Laura Engelstein’s 1992 book, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia.* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press]. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. # Carleton, G., (2005), *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, University of Pittsburgh Press. P.2.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. # Carleton, G., (2005), *Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia Sexual Revolution in Bolshevik Russia*, University of Pittsburgh Press. P. 3.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. Kolakowski, L. (2005). P. 830. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. # Naiman, E. and Kiaer, C. (2006), *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*. Indiana University Press. Pp. 154-182.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Halfin, I. (2003), *Terror in my Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial*. Harvard University Press. Pp. 96-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. # Miller, M. (1998), *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*. Yale University Press. P. 54

     [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Gonzáles-Rey, F. (2015), ‘Marxism, Subjectivity and Cultural Historical Psychology: Moving Forward on an Unfinished Legacy’, *Annual Review of Critical Psychology (Marxism and Psychology)*, Vol. 12. P. 27 [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Miller, M. (1998). P. 28 [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Vygotsky, S., Lev, (1986), *Thought and Language*, The Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Vygotsky, S., Lev, (1978), *The Mind in Society. The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Miller, M. (1998). P. 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Miller, M. (1998). P. 58 [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Miller, M. (1998). P. 63 [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. Miller, M. (1998). Pp. 71-77 [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Reich, W. (2012), *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929-1934*, Verso. P. 77 [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. Miller, M. (1998). Pp. 87-88 [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. Tögel, C. (1989), Lenin und die Rezeption der Psychoanalyse in der Sowjetunion der Zwanziger Jahre. *Sigmund Freud House Bulletin*, 13. Pp. 16-27. Cited in Páramo-Ortega, R. (2015), Marxism and Psychoanalysis: Attempting a Brief Review of an Old Problem, *Annual Review of Critical Psychology (Marxism and Psychology)*, Vol. 12. P. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Trotsky, L. (2009), *Literature and Revolution*, Haymarket. P. 76 [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Miller, M. (1989). P. 87 [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Trotsky quoted in Miller, M. (1989). P. 87 [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Trotsky quoted in Páramo-Ortega, R. (2015). P. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Trotsky, L. (2009). P. 227 [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. (https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1932/11/oct.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. This situation, the result of the codified orthodoxy of Soviet Marxism, continued into the 1950s. In 1950 the ‘biologist’ Olga Lepeshinskaya, with a string of false and grandiose pseudo-scientific claims behind her, sensationally announced the successful production of living cells from inorganic substrates. With no further scrutiny, this absurd claim was hailed in *Pravda* as a triumph of ‘socialist science’ over ‘bourgeois science’. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. In 1941 he was given the State Stalin Prize for science. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. This did not in fact save Zalkind himself who continued to be hounded for his earlier associations with psychoanalysis, disappearing some time after the closing down of the field of pedology in 1936. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Miller, M. (1989). P. 91 [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. ‘Sex-Pol’ was an abbreviation for the German Society of Proletarian Sexual Politics. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Reich, W. (1972), *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis,* Socialist Reproduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1997), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Verso. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1997). Pp. 197-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Federn, P. (1919), *Zur Psychologie der Revolution: die vaterlose Gesellschaft*, Anzengruber-Verlag [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Reich, W. (1972), *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis,* Socialist Reproduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism,* first published in English in 1946, Reich lists four ‘discoveries’ of psychoanalysis: the unconscious; infantile sexuality; repression; and the origin of morality in the suppression of early childhood memory. Reich, W. (1997), *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, Souvenir Press. Pp. 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Reich, W. (1972). P. 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Reich, W. (1972). P. 49 [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. Reich, W. (1972). P. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. Reich, W. (1972). Pp. 53-54 [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. Reich, W. (1980), *Character Analysis*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux Inc. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Reich, W. (1997), The Mass Psychology of Fascism, Souvenir Press Ltd. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Bernfeld was later to turn against Reich for the latter’s communism and was instrumental to him being expelled from the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1934. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Bernfeld, S. (1929), *The Psychology of the Infant*. Kegan Paul. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Bernfeld, S. (1925), *Psychoanalysis and Socialism*, Der Kampf London:Socialist Reproduction. (Reprinted 1972) [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Bernfeld, S. (1925), *Sysiphus, or the Limits of Education*, University of California Press. (Reprinted 1973) [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. *Op Cit*., pp. 41-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Fenichel, O. (1967), ’Psychoanalysis as the Nucleus of a Future Dialectical-Materialist Psychology’, *The American Imago: A psychoanalytical journal for the arts and sciences*. P. 298 [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Fenichel, O. (1954), ‘Psychoanalytic Remarks on Fromm’s Book *Escape from Freedom*’ [1944] in *The Collected Works of Otto Fenichel: Second Series*, eds. Fenichel, H. And Rapaport, D. New York. Norton. P.261. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. *The Working-class in Weimar Germany. A Psychological and Sociological Study.* (1984). (Based upon a report from empirical work conducted in 1929: *German Worker 1929- A Survey and its Methods*). [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Fromm, E. (2001), *The Fear of Freedom*, Routledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Fromm, E. (2001). P. 25 [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. Fromm, E. (1962), *Beyond the Chains of Illusion*. Abacus. Pp. 119-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Fromm was to develop the concept of ‘automaton conformity’ into the ‘marketing orientation’ (or type) in *Man for Himself* (1947). Pp. 67-81 [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. # See Burston, D. (1991), *The Legacy of Erich Fromm*, Harvard University Press. Pp. 207-229.

     [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. McLaughlin, N. (1999), ‘Origin Myths in the Social Sciences: Fromm, the Frankfurt School and the Emergence of Critical Theory’, *Canadian Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 24 (1). Pp 109-39. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Fromm, E. (2001). Pp. 247-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Fromm was to continue with this critical engagement with Freud’s work throughout his life and it was the subject matter of the last book he was to publish: *The Greatness and Limitations of Freud’s Thought* (1980). His critique covered the theory of the libido, the Oedipus complex, character theory and Freud’s theory of the death instinct. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Fromm, E. (2003), *Man for Himself*, Routledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. Fromm, E. (1995), *The Art of Loving,* Thorsons [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Fromm, E. (1968), *The Nature of Man (Problems of Philosophy),* MacMillan USA. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Fromm, E. (2013), *To Have or to Be,* Bloomsbury Academic [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. See Fromm, E. (2011), *Marx’s Concept of Man*, Bloomsbury Academic. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Fromm (E.), *Beyond the Chains of Illusion* (1962). Abacus. P. 164 [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Marcuse, H. (1998), *Eros and Civilization: a philosophical inquiry into Freud*, Routledge. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Marcuse, H. (1998). P. 19 [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Ocay, J. (2009), ‘Eroticizing Marx, Revolutionizing Freud: Marcuse’s Psychoanalytic Turn’, *Kritike*, Vol. 3(1). P. 14 [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Marcuse, H. (1998). Pp. 87-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Marcuse, M. (1991), *One Dimensional Man*, Routledge. P74 [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Marcuse, M. (1991), *One Dimensional Man*, Routledge. P72. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. An observation made by Aronowitz (2013:45). Aronowitz, A. (2013), ‘Marcuse’s Conception of Eros’, in *Radical Philosophy Review*. Vol. 16(1). [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. This trans-sexual aspect of the eroticisation of life is counter-posed to Reich’s notion of a liberated *genital* sexual fulfilment in a socialist society by Garland (2013) [Garland, C. (2013), ‘The Freudian Moment: Reflections on Herbert Marcuse’, in Gellner, D. (ed.) 2013) *Illuminations*. http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/Illumina%20Folder/garland%5Bmarcuse.htm] [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Marcuse, H. (2000), Beacon Press, Boston. P.91. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Despite the later uptake of Marcuse’s subtle reworking of Freud’s libido theory by the post-war counter-culture there were those within the traditional North American Left who at the time of the publication of *Eros and Civilization* could not see past the individualised and intrinsically theoretical nature of Freud’s thought. For an example of this stubborn refusal to allow Freud to be ‘rescued’ for the Left see Mattick, P. (1956), ‘Marx and Freud’, *Western Socialist* (March-April 1956).

     [http://www.marxists.org/archive/mattick-paul/1956/marcuse.htm] [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Lacan’s first attempt to present the ‘mirror stage’ had been thirteen years earlier at the 14th Congress. Before his ten minutes were up Lacan’s presentation was abruptly cut short by Ernest Jones who was in the chair: an early portent of Lacan’s difficult relationship with the mainstream of the international psychoanalytical community. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. For Herbert Mead, the major theorist of symbolic interactionism, the continuous mental impressions, perceptions and constructions of the other person are what make socially meaningful and empathetic relationships possible: the source of ‘sociality’. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Wiley, N. (2003), ‘The Self as Self-Fulfilling Prophecy’, *Symbolic Interaction*, Vol. 26 (4). Pp. 501–513. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Lacan, J. (2002), ‘The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience’, in *Écrits: a selection*. P.3. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. The direct influence of Saussurian linguistic theory is evident here. So too is the anthropological structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss with which Lacan was deeply engaged in the 1950s. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. Lacan, J. (2002), ‘The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis’ in *Écrites*, Norton. P.67. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Lacan, J. (1999), ***Seminar XX*,** *Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge,* **Miller, J., A. (ed.), W.W. Norton. P48.**L'inconscient est structur� comme un language.L'inconscient est structur� comme un language.L'inconscient est structur� comme un language. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Homer, S. (2005), *Jacques Lacan*, Routledge. P.69. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. NTS: is there a comparison with Marcuse to made here re: surplus repression? [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Lacan, J. (2002), ‘The Signification of the Phallus’ in *Écrites*, Norton. P. 275. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. The ‘a’ standing for *autre*,: ‘other’. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Fanon, F. (2001), *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. McCoy, L. (2011), ‘Frantz Fanon’s Call to Anti-Colonial Violence’, ProQuest Discovery Guides, <http://www.csa.com/discoveryguides/discoveryguides-main.php> (accessed 5 September 2013). P.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Fanon, F. (2008), *Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Nursey-Bray (1972) for example has explored the tensions between influences of Sartre and Marx within Fanon’s thought. (Nursey-Bray, P. (1972), ‘Marxism and Existentialism in the Thought of Franz Fanon’, *Political Studies*, Vol. XX (2). Pp. 152-168). [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Fanon, F. (1990), *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin. P. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. Fanon, F. (1990), P.57. Quoted by Faircheld, H. (1994), ‘Franz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* in Contemporary Perspective’, *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 25 (2). P. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. In *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1950) [Publisher: Editions du Seuil. Paris],Mannoni had argued that the Malagasi of Madagascar had deep within their culture and social-psychology, a ‘dependency-complex’ that transferred to the colonial situation. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press. New York. P.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks.* P. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks.* P. 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. This is a point made abundantly by Margaret Mead in her descriptions of the modes of sexual partnering and familial dynamics of the Samoan, Mundugumor and Trobriand peoples. Mead, M. (1950), in *Male and Female A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*. Victor Gollanz. Pp. 119-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks.* P. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks.* P. 165 [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. Fanon, F. (1967), *Black Skin, White Masks.* Pp. 161-164 [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Michell, J. (1966), ‘Women: the Longest Revolution’, *New Left Review*. No. 40. This was republished with minor changes in Mitchell, J. (1971; 1977), *Woman’s Estate*. Pp. 75-96; 100-122; and 144-151. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Mitchell (1977). Pp. 81-84. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Mitchell, J. (1974), *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, Allen Lane. P.349. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Mitchell, J. (1974). Pp. 305-318. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Freud, S. (1925), *Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Differences Between the Sexes*. (<http://www.aquestionofexistence.com/Aquestionofexistence/Problems_of_Gender/Entries/2011/8/28_Sigmund_Freud_files/Freud%20Some%20Psychological%20Consequences%20of%20the%20Anatomical%20Distinction%20between%20the%20Sexes.pdf> . Accessed 14 March 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Cited by Mitchell, J. (1984), *Women: The Longest Revolution*. Pantheon. P. 267 [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. The notion of the repression of the clitoris reads oddly today given the profound impact of the Woman’s Liberation Movement on awareness of its importance for female sexuality. We can only remind ourselves to understand Freud in terms of his historical and cultural context. We might do well also to keep in mind that the tension between outward ‘clitoral’ sexuality and passive ‘receptive, vaginal’ sexuality remains a battleground in our culture today. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Mitchell, J. (1985) in Mitchell, J. and Rose, J. (1985), *Feminine Sexuality. Jaque Lacan and the école freudienne.* Norton and Pantheon. P. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Mitchell, J. (1984), *Women: The Longest Revolution*, Pantheon. P. 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Michell, J. (1966), *Women’s Estate*, Penguin. 1971. P. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009), *Reading Capital*, Verso. P. 16 [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009). P. 143 [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009). P. 249 [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009). P. 243 [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009). P. 40 [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Althusser, L. and Balibar, E. (2009). P. 157 [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Althusser, L. (2005), *For Marx*, Verso. P. 101 [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Althusser, L. (2005). Pp. 101-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Reply to John Lewis’ in *Essays on Ideology*, Verso. P. 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. Althusser, L. (1978), *Essays in Self-criticism*, Verso. P.59-63 [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Althusser, L. (2005). P. 229-30 [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Althusser, L. (2006), *Politics and History: Montesquieu, Rousseau, Marx*, Verso. Pp. 182-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. Althusser, L. (2001), ‘Lenin and Philosophy’ in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press. P. 42 [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Althusser, L. (2001), ‘A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre’ in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press. P. 155 [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Blaise Pascal. 17th Century mathematician and Christian philosopher. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ in Althusser, L. (1993). Pp. 44-51 [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ in Althusser, L. (1993). P. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ in Althusser, L. (1993). P. 50 [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Althusser, L. (1996), ‘Freud and Lacan’ in *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, Columbia. P. 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Reply to John Lewis’ in Althusser, L. (1993). P. 54 [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. Althusser, L. (1993), ‘Reply to John Lewis’ in Althusser, L. (1993). Pp. 54-55 [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. Deleuze, G. and Guatarri, F. (2013), *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Bloomsbury Academic. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Deleuze, G. and Guatarri, F. (2013), *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury Academic. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Deleuze, G. and Guatarri, F. (2013), *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury Academic. P.30 [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Deleuze, G. and Guatarri, F. (2013), *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury Academic. P. 33 [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. Quoting Carlos Castaneda, *Tales of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p.125. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Castaneda, C. (1974). P. 183 [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Castaneda, C. (1974). P. 161 [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Deleuze, G. and Guatarri, F. (2013), *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury Academic. P.179 [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. Three principle texts by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have gained audiences within contemporary social movements. They are: *Empire* (2000), Harvard; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of* Empire (2004), Penguin; and *Commonwealth* (2009), Harvard. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2000). Pp. 91-93 [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Briefly, ‘anti-psychiatry’ was a term of descriptive convenience that grouped together quite different figures in terms of theoretical lineage and political stance. Key names included Michel Foucault (author of: *Madness and Civilisation*, Vintage, 2006*; The Birth of the Clinic*, Routledge, 2003; and *The Architecture of Knowledge*, Pantheon, 1972), Ronald Laing (author of the *Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness,* Penguin Psychology, 1965), Thomas Szaz (author of *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*, Syracuse University Press, 1997) and Erving Goffman (author of *Asylums: The Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Penguin, 1991). Each of these figures critiqued the constructions of mental illness used by the orthodox professional psychiatry, rather psychoanalysis *per se*. In that respect, whilst they may be of general interest they need not be considered separately in a study of the interactions between Marxism and psychoanalysis. That said, ‘anti-psychiatry’ did become a target for a critique that came from a Marxist standpoint in the work of Peter Sedgwick. For Sedgwick, diseases of the mind also are social constructions; the result of value-based notions of health. In this sense however, they are on a spectrum that includes physical illnesses seen as constructions in just the same way. Putting it differently, mental ailments, whilst social in nature, are no less real for that. So, whilst the anti-psychiatrists tended to base their critique upon the idea of mental illness as a means of social control, operating through the medicalisation of manufactured definitions of normal behaviour, under Sedgwick’s unitary definition of health, covering both its mental and physical aspects, psychological disorders were recognised as involving real pain, and so demanding sympathy and medical attention in the form of psychiatry, defended now as a legitimate area of medicine. (See Sedgwick, P. (1982), *PsychoPolitics*, Pluto. P. 37-8; and Sedgwick, P. (1981), ‘Michel Foucault: The Anti-history of Psychiatry’, *Psychological Medicine*, Vol. 11. Pp. 235-248). [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Kant, I. (1999), *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge University Press. Pp. 201-266 [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. ## Žižek ,S. (2009), The Sublime Object of Desire, Verso. Pp. 125-6

     [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Žižek, S. (2009), *The Ticklish Subject. The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, Verso. P. 141 [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Badiou, A. (2011), *Being and Event*, Continuum. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Badiou, A. (2011). P. 8 [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Badiou, A. (2011). P. 15 [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. Badiou, A. (2009), *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, Continuum. Pp. 47-8 [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. Badiou, A. (2009). P. 47 [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. See Jay, M., 1973. P.42 [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. The description coined by David Strauss. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. This view was foreshadowed by Johann Gottlieb Fichte, in his *Foundations of Natural Right* (1797). [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Kautsky, K., (1934) [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. Kolakowski, L. (2005). P. 388 [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Bernstein, E. (1899), *Evolutionary Socialism. A Criticism and Affirmation*, (1899). New York: B.W. Huebsch. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924002311557>. Published in England as *Preconditions of Socialism* (1909; 2010) [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Stalin, J., (1938) [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Kolakowski, L. (2005). Pp. 902-913. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Jay, M., (1973), p.107 [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Later republished as *The Fear of Freedom* (1942). [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. The material for this 1958 publication had derived from Marcuse’s work at the US Government’s Office for Strategic Services during the War. When this revelation appeared it led to Marcuse’s rapid loss of political credibility with the student movement that had previously feted him as a prophet of the Revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Marcuse, H. (1958; 1969). P 232. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)