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Foundations of Marxism and Ilyenkovian Contributions: "The Ambulance of Theory Arrived on the Scene Much Too Late"

Siyaveş Azeri

THAT WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF TOTAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM, although correct, *may* also be a misleading formulation as it implies that there can be a capitalism, even though "temporarily," without crises, that crises can be "fixed," that crisis is extrinsic to capital relation and a "normal" capitalism, perhaps one with a human face is viable. However, once analyzed closely and critically, it becomes visible that every aspect and facet of capitalism, every form and mode of existence of its essence—the capital relation—from the relations of production (with "production" being broadly construed) to legal and moral-ethical relations, to theoretical, scientific and philosophical conceptualizations of these relations, is crisis-ridden—crisis is intrinsic and essential to capitalism; capital-relation *is the crisis*. Even the admission of the fact that crisis or "the state of emergency" is *the norm* and "normal" periods of capitalist relations, which signify "conventional" periods of accumulation of capital, are exceptions, unless certain qualifications are sought, falls short in grasping the essence of capitalism as *the* crisis: capitalism persists not despite but through and *as* crises because in its essence, it is contradictory and constitutes an antagonistic totality.

This antagonism is expressed theoretically in, among others, age-old dualities such as the mind-body, subject-object, emotion-reason, morality-rationality, and nature-culture, all of which are different forms of appearance of the allegedly dichotomous relation between thought/thinking and being/reality. Analyzing these aspects, I contend, is a constituent of a total

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• *Correspondence:* Siyaveş Azeri, University of Tyumen, School of Advanced Studies.
• *e-mail*: siyavesazeri[at]gmail.com
• ORCID: 0000-0002-3765-2489
• DOI: 10.56063/MS.2301.02108
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understanding, criticizing, and transcending capitalism; a practical critique of capital-relation cannot be a mere "negation" of capital relation because capital works through and *is* these forms of its appearance—these are mediations through which capital relation is actualized, in other words, these are the forms of actualization of capital relation. A total criticism of the capitalist relations of production is necessarily a critique of its forms of actualization.

This is not to replace the so-called revolutionary practice and practical critique of capitalism with a "theoretical" critique or a critique of theory, nor is it to complement practical criticism and political action with theoretical "consciousness" or a critique of "ideology"; as Marx succinctly puts, "The weapon of criticism cannot, of course, replace criticism by weapons, material force must be overthrown by material force," yet he adds, "but theory also becomes a material force as soon as it has gripped the masses […] as soon as it becomes radical […] as soon as it grasps the roots of the matter" (Marx 2010, 182). Theoretical critique *is* and *should be* radical and totalizing, otherwise, to borrow Evald Ilyenkov's apropos formulation, its ambulance will inevitably arrive on the scene much too late (1971). Such radicalism requires a critical analysis of capitalist totality in each and every sphere with the aim of revealing why and how the essence—the capital relation—appears as it does.

Ilyenkov's philosophical-theoretical contributions to Marxian philosophy, dialectics, and method, which encompass vast areas from the problem of the ideal, (critique of) epistemology, philosophy and theory of education, and dialectical logic to the formation of human mind, consciousness, philosophical psychology, and ethics and aesthetics not only is paradigmatic of such a radical totalizing theoretical-philosophical analysis and criticism that is true to the spirit of Marx and Engels, but also reveals how Marxian theory and philosophy can genuinely be developed in face of contemporary issues and the permanent capitalist crisis. In the following, I particularly focus on two of Ilyenkov's critical elaborations, namely, "Humanism and Science" (1971) and "On the Question of the Identity of Thought and Being" (1997) with the aim of showing how the so apparently distinct and distanced spheres are mutually interconnected and related to the essence of the capitalist relations of production.

In "Humanism and Science," Ilyenkov touches upon a problem at the core of modern thought—the dichotomy or opposition between the mind and the "heart" or between emotions and reason. Accordingly, there is a dissonance between the desires and dictates of the heart and conclusions

drawn discursively by the mind, i.e., there is a conflict between emotional responses and conscience, on the one side, and rational calculations, on the other (1971). The important point is that this conflict is not a result of the caprices of dualist philosophers or the dogmas of their philosophies. Rather, "it is a stuff of reality, the centre of our lives and thoughts" (Ibid.).[1]

The aforementioned conflict has severe consequences as it is immediately related to making decisions concerning the path to be taken, particularly when (which means almost always) the two dictums openly contradict each other. Is it possible to come up with some universal scheme for decision-making in face of these circumstances? Which of the principles should be considered foundational in making up our minds: the voice of conscience or the imperative of reason? Furthermore, which conditions are responsible for the emergence of such contradictory situations?

It seems that in face of such conflicts one has no choice other than one of these elements against the other: on the one side the apparently nobler choice determined by dictums of morality concretized in characters of Don Quixote or Prince Myshkin in Dostoevsky's *Idiot*, on the other side the calculative mind and coldly "rational" choice exemplified by the character of Rudolf Hess. The two sides, noble sentimentalism devoid of rationality that amounts to tragedy, and sometimes farce, and the cold-blooded calculative utilitarianism that amounts to a complete moral collapse, seem to be exclusive. But are they? As Ilyenkov notes, both these positions "lead to defeat, to demise and to self-negation" (Ibid.), which in turn signify their complementarity, in fact, their fundamental unity: both are expressions of the inhumane circumstances humanity has been subjected to; the two are simply the two sides of the coin of the capitalist relations of production meaning that as much as the dichotomy between the poles is real as much

1. The problem that Ilyenkov puts before himself resembles the one, which, according to Bakhurst (2022), the "Oxford Quartet" (Anscombe, Murdoch, Foot, and Midgley) had set to tackle, namely "the positivist orthodoxy" that rigidly distinguishes fact from value on the basis of the "attendant thesis that value judgements are merely expressions of attitudes we freely choose to adopt, and hence that notions of moral truth and objectivity are metaphysical nonsense" (814). Both Ilyenkov and the Quartet "resolutely oppose to scientism, reductionism and narrow empiricism" while addressing "the need to *defend* science as something more than just another species of opinion—a stance familiar from the protestations of climate change deniers, vaccine sceptics and the like" (Ibid., 821). Yet, in my view, Ilyenkov's attempt transcends that of the Quartet in that it includes a critique of the everyday and the ordinary as the ground that determines the *form* of dominant morality, while the Quartet proposes "an appreciation of the ordinary" through emancipation from the metaphysical and theoretical ideas and concepts that hold us captive (Ibid., 817). The "mundane" and the "theoretical," rather than being opposites, are complementary.

it is just a pseudo-dichotomy—a non-existent existent reminiscent of "sensible supra-sensible" existence of commodity-fetishes (Marx 1992, 164). The experience of such dichotomies in real life is in no way illusory just as much as the determination of the relation between individuals by commodities and the social relations between the latter is not. Rather, it signifies the irrationality of not only the moral-sentimental element, but also of the reason that apparently is in opposition to sentiments;[2] it signifies the irrational rationality of the actual when looked at from the yet-to-be-actualized. As the actual present, and contradictory as it may seem, both parties are "rational" but their inevitable demise and self-negation point to their irrationality and the necessity of their replacement with a new, humane actuality—communism.

The conflict between science and morality is itself a partial form of appearance of capitalist social division of labour that culminates in the division between manual and intellectual labour.[3] Kant's division between "pure" and "practical" reasons is yet another expression of this divide. The outcome of this separation, to the extent that the relation between science and morality is concerned, is a science devoid of all human sentiments, science as an utilitarian endeavour subsumed under instrumental reason that functions as a natural force of capital and an "abstract humanism", which noble as it may be, is "powerless before the "force of circumstances" and condemned to the fate of a lamb before the slaughter" (Ilyenkov 1971). Both these poles are catastrophic to human civilization as they share the

2. Charles Percy Snow, in *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*, apparently addresses this divide in form of a total estrangement between scientific reason and artistic passion. However, in his account, the divide follows from a genuine essential difference between artistic attitude and scientific rigour; he dismisses that both science and art (reason and passion) are products, better to say, intellectual forms of appearance of the historically specific social relations and the mode of production. Contrary to Ilyenkov, Snow ignores the complementarity of the dominant reason and dominant passion—of capital—which is manifest, among others, in their blindness toward their historicity and social determinations. Hence his banal conclusion that the divide can be fixed through a reform in education (1961, 19), which is complemented by his techno-scientific determinism and reductionism (Ibid., 24). Snow does not overcome the divide but wipes out one party (sentimental "intellectuality") in favour of another (techno-scientific rationality). For an interesting take on Snow's problem of "the two cultures" from a Marxist point of view see Gedik 2015.

3. "Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc." (Marx & Engels 1976, 44-45)

common denominator of the exclusivity of reason and emotions; both parties uncritically endorse an historically specific situation as natural, ontological and thus permanent and in doing so, both parties leave the real historical ground—the capitalist mode of production—that yields this divide intact. One camp, scientism, intentionally or unintentionally, ends in supporting capitalism unconditionally deifying science and the so-called scientific rationality (which cannot be other than the reason of capital) and forms the caste of priests of this new spirit, while the other camp, abstract therefore romantic humanism, ends in "criticizing" capital from within capital by deifying "reason" as the cause of the catastrophe through identifying an historical form of reason with "reason-in-general." One camp mistakes the historically scientific reason, which is the product of a specific mode of human activity, with Reason as the spirit that runs the machine, the other camp attacks the machine to fight the ghost hidden underneath.

From the non-Marxian, uncritical point of view the remedy is just an arm's length away; it would be sufficient to inject a dose of science and knowledge, a bit of scientific "literacy," to the supposedly moral layperson who is good by "nature" or vice versa, provide a code of values as some moral regulator to the highly scientific-minded expert and everything will be in order and no catastrophe anymore. Is such a "solution" viable? Is this proposal more than a fix or an adhesive band put on an amputated limb?

Kant's proposal, Ilyenkov argues, is the height of the latter position (which, in the final analysis, dialectically yields the former position). For Kant pure reason and practical reason function as two fundamental, independent powers. Pure reason is bound to the description, albeit partial, of the *is* without having a say on the *ought*—it cannot judge whether something is good or bad with regard to the well-being of human species. Practical reason is a moral regulator, a power checking on pure reason dictating the moral imperatives that cannot be scientifically proven or rejected (a position that eventually would be endorsed by logical positivism and post-positivism with the former bashing it as metaphysical nonsense and the latter approving it conditionally as lying out of boundaries of scientific thought). At its basis, categorical imperative is determined by faith; pure scientific reason is neither good nor bad and thus it can serve both good and evil; thus, it should be restricted by the moral imperatives of the practical reason. Pure reason, necessarily, arrives at antinomies that are irresolvable by appealing to the resources of pure intellect; in such cases of under-determination the choice between the alternatives provided by the pure reason should be left to the practical reason as the external arbiter.

Satisfactory and genuine as it may seem, Kant's position is open to counterargument. A contrary formulation to that of Kant is also conceivable: after all, why should rational, scientific reason be subordinate to practical reason the source of imperatives of which are unknown? Why shouldn't ethics and practical reason be subsumed under pure reason? One may further argue that this is a more viable proposal as it assumes the identity between pure and practical reasons—the latter becomes a derivative of the former—basing moral imperatives on "human nature." Despite its appearance as superior to Kant's ethics, this position is nothing other than its mirror-image. This

> latter would be a wonderful solution, but only under the condition that the notion (science) were an absolute one in terms of infallibility, to repeat, free of error. To put it briefly the scientific notion would have to possess all those qualities of divine perfection ascribed to it by Plato and Hegel respectively. (Ilyenkov 1971)

In other words, the pure reason should be a deity, possessing all attributes of God—idealism in its crudest mode. This position amounts to subordination of human being to its own product; science, after all, is a human-made tool with the purpose of serving the well-being and happiness of human-kind. However, in this picture human being is considered an appendage to the science-machine, a mere executor of its commands. This could be tolerable if scientific reason would be as "pure" as Kant and his successors of different breeds claim it to be, but what if it is not the case? And it is much more likely that it is not as pure since reason is always human reason—and not that of an abstract, "human-in-general" but of concrete, socially and historically determinate persons. With deification of science—and of morality as its mirror-image—we are once again in "the misty realm of religion […] [where] 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" (Marx 1992, 165). The subordination of human species to science and/or morality as oppressive forces capable of even extermination of human kind and the whole life on the planet "testifies above all to the inhuman, anti-humanist nature of that *system of relations between people* which so perverts the relations between science, morality and the human being" (Ilyenkov 1971, emphases original).

The aforementioned idealist formulation of science-fetish as the new deity, which replaces Hegel's God-Logos, is reflected in the perverse image of the "thinking machine" the intellectual capabilities of which are expected to exceed those of human beings. The inherent idealism that haunts

the proponents of the so-called Artificial Intelligence and the Thinking Machine discloses their simplistic mode of conceptualization of thinking/thought as an algorithmic procedure of compiling information. This conceptualization is rooted in the idea that it is the brain, and not the person with the use of brain, that thinks. But what is a person?

Even if the artificial brain-machine is provided with super-sensitive receptors and organs of activity similar to those of human beings one cannot speak of a thinking machine in the specific sense of thinking as a human activity. This latter point is related to how one conceives of human individuals. In the formulation above, a human being is considered an abstract, trans-historical entity independent of social relations among people. Whereas human personality is not a biologically inherited entity, and neither is their thinking ability—the "biological" might be the necessary but it is definitely not the sufficient cause for the emergence of specifically human thinking. Human thinking, like all other human activities, is socially "inherited"; it is bound to transmission of knowledge from generation to generation and is a response to socially created forms, needs, and goals—human civilization (Arseniev, Ilyenkov & Davydov 1966). It is by acquisition of the "ideal" norms of human culture through learning to act and working with the artefacts that populate the social universe that one turns into a human person capable of thinking, speaking, and acting humanly. Personhood, therefore, is social through and through. Hence, thinking ability is not determined by the individual features and morphological characteristics of a single individual as much as it is determined by the complex system of organization of people—social relations among people. " 'Thinking' is the active function of *this* system. [It is] derived from its structure, from its 'morphology,' from its organization, from its needs and possibilities. The *thinking* individual himself is only an organ of this system" (Ibid.). Thus, the emergence of an artificial mind that is truly intelligent requires not only building a machine after the image of an individual person, but more importantly, it is in need of the creation of the whole social setting that includes both all the "pluses" (the success, etc.) and all the "minuses" (all the pros and cons) of human civilization, let alone the necessity of developing the "organs" facilitating participation in spiritual life of the society, from sexual love and evoking mutual emotions in another to willing and imagining.

The techno-scientific obsession with thinking machines that will be smarter than human beings reveals important tacit assumptions of the pro-

ponents of such an idea regarding the nature of thinking activity, the relation between reason and emotions (which was addressed above), the concepts of personality and individuality, and the relation between human beings and machines. As Arseniev, Ilyenkov and Davydov note, "the question of the relationship between human and machine is primarily a *social* question" (Ibid.) which cannot be answered in "purely scientific" terms even if the human person is considered to be a machine as it is done from techno-scientific (cybernetic) point of view. The answer to this last question betrays the apologetic attitude toward the existing capitalist social relations where technology and machinery do not function as instruments at the service of the well-being of human species, but as end in themselves of which the individual person is an appendage and raw material—machines are revolutionary means of extraction of surplus-value. This is a much more inhumane picture when compared to Hegel's proposed relation between the Geist and human individual. As Ilyenkov notes, "with Hegel God-Logos specifically granted men the right to act as instruments of self-cognition and self-awareness, 'objectification' and 'de-objectification' […] Man as a thinking being is the God of this world" (1971). In the techno-scientific imagery, however, human is deprived of all its agency and is turned into an automaton.

The alleged dichotomy between humanism and science (pure reason and practical reason, intellect and emotion) is an inevitable consequence of the capitalist relations of production that subordinates all human activity to the universal goal of valorization of capital by every means. The proclaimed neutrality and indifference of science (and scientists) in relation to political, social, and moral issues and considering them as extrinsic to scientific endeavor is another form of expression of instrumentalisation of reason and utilitarian approach to human species. In this picture humans are not considered as ends, but as mere means. Among the products of such approach are the physicist that considers the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima "a perfect experiment in physics" and Rudolf Hess who conceptualizes devising means of genocide against the Jewish population as a mere technical problem. The indifferent stance that facilitates such monstrosities is based on the presupposition of the discreteness of realms of thought and action, which itself is rooted in the assumption of the non-identity of thought and reality. Contradictory as it may seem, the supposed non-identity of thought and being is itself a showcase of the identity of a specific form of thought and being (of thinking and action). In fact, thinking independent of action or thought independent of reality is a contradiction in

terms as thinking not only is always thinking an object but also is a mode of activity of the thinking body with latter being understood as a social relation. The claim concerning the non-identity of thought and reality and the indifference of objective thought toward social and ethical issues is the expression of a particular politico-philosophical stance that naturalizes and thus legitimizes the existing inhumane social relations. Hence follows the importance of clarifying the meaning of the identity of thought and reality from the activity materialist point of view.

Following Feuerbach, Ilyenkov proposes that the very form of stating the question as one concerning the relation between thought and being is fallacious as it presupposes thinking/thought not as a human activity and its peculiar consequence, not as thinking activity of the thinking body, but as something independent from such activity, external to it—not as an "ideal," but as a substance—that further also includes "being in general." Despite all its shortcomings Feuerbach's formulation of the question transcends idealist formulations—that of Hegel's included. Being is not something general that is entailed by thought in general; it is the reality before us, "given" to the "senses," which includes stones, mountains, stars, and automobiles as much as thought as the product of the thinking body.

Hence follows the task of materialist dialectical thinking: to show why idealism arises and why it is so prevalent. What is the source of the idealist illusion that thought and matter are two disparate substances that are in need of reconciliation? One general reason for such misunderstanding is that the brain, like any other human organ, is an instrument of activity. Thus, it cannot have itself as its object of activity (unless certain conditions are met). The illusion that thought is a substance other than thinking that is actualized with the use of brain is similar to considering seeing/sight as a substance despite the eye; that the eye cannot (and better that it cannot) see itself is the necessary condition for the formation of sight but it does not make the latter independent of the former. The same goes with the relation between thinking/thought and brain.

Thought/thinking is an activity in the world; the concepts and images are where the real things are, meaning that the world of thinking and that of doing are one and the same as thinking is always thinking a thing or thinking on a thing just as working is working something or on something. Thus, there is no need for a divine mediation, for a spirit bridging the two: the bridge is the very acting agent, the human being as the subject of the work and thinking. Hence, writes Ilyenkov, "the determinations of the

world in thought (logical determinations) are directly and immediately determinations of the contemplated world" (1997, 20). With the same token, the person that partakes in scientific activity and participates in the production of scientific knowledge, is the same person that behaves and acts in accordance to certain moral codes—these are the one and the same person and not two different individuals; their intellectual activity as well as their moral attitude and conduct are determined by the ideal rules and regulations that determine the form and mode of activity in each sphere with both being rooted in and determined by the historically specific mode of social activity. Thus follows the unity of their logical determinations with logic being understood as "the abstract-universal forms of real content of thought" and the determinations of the sensuous world, which, in its turn, signifies the unity of cognition and ethics as two aspects of logic as "not a set of rules for expressing thought in speech but the science of the laws of development of real thought" (Ibid., 20).

Both Hegelian idealism and Feuerbachian materialism amount to political conservatism in face the existing socio-political state of affairs. Hegelian idealism, despite its apparent active aspect, is poitivistic, passive, and apologetic as it bounds itself with "the empirically obvious state of affairs in the real world" (ibid., 17), meaning that it treats them as naturally given. Similarly, crude materialism, that of Feuerbach's included, due to its contemplative standpoint, falls back to the point of naturalizing the existing order, conceives of reality as fragmentary, as an objectivity constituted of individual, discrete parts and entities and not as relations and processes. Furthermore, such materialism necessarily ignores the social determinations of "sensuous" activity and cognition. Thus, its account of activity is abstractly individual; accordingly, sensuous activity is a natural processing of neutral data (sense perception, atomic data, so on and so forth) and thus carries no specific socio-historical significance.

One specificity of Marxian materialism, in contrast to crude materialism and idealism, is its emphasis on activity as the line of unity of thinking and being (the immediate unity of the thinking body and being happens not in contemplation, as, say, Feuerbach suggests, but in activity, in praxis). Due to sociality of human activity, when considered individualistically, the products of social labour, as non-individual entities, appear as mere objects of the senses as, say, is the case with planets or asteroids afar. Thus, Feuerbach commits the same fallacy as idealists: the latter, ignoring the social origins of the "ideal," are misled by the latter's independence

from individual persons and consider them as entities in and by themselves; the former, for the same reason, attributes such independence to the objects of the senses. The latter fetishizes thought, the former fetishizes things. As Ilyenkov states,

> Feuerbach abstracts from the real complexities of the social relations between theory and practice, from the division of labor, which alienates thought (in the form of science) from the majority of individuals and transforms it into a force independent of them and existing outside them. (Ibid., 23)

The standpoint of a science that is blind to its own historicity, that is, to its own being a product of social human activity, recapitulates crude materialism and idealism simultaneously: science, in a general, trans-historical sense, is thought alienated from individuals, appearing as a force independent from them; this is due to social division of labour. Under capitalism, the alienated thought acquires a semblance of total independence just as Feuerbach's alleged nature is "independent" from human beings and their activity or as thought is supposedly independent from the social body in form of Spirit or the Idea for Hegel or Plato. However, due to its "ideality," thought has sanctions on human activity and determines its mode, even their individual conduct; it is similar to the workers becoming subordinate to the laws of their own working as if it is an independent law functioning behind their back.

The same goes for moral laws and imperatives: these are imperatives drawn from action/activity; this is in fact admitted by Kant himself. However, at one level, they are considered being the immediate contrary of the pure reason (the recapitulation of the binary between theory and practice or between mind and body), which at another level can only be related to pure reason externally and mechanically—as is in the case of subordination of pure reason to practical reason in face of antinomies of reason or underdetermination. What should be stressed is the assumption that morality lies outside the boundaries of pure reason and not something that is essentially related to it: Kant ignores that both the so-called pure reason and practical reason are manifestations of one and the same essence: the historically specific form of human activity; thus he ignores the fact that the moral imperative is the corollary to and the mirror-image of the immoral and the unethical.[4] This is a position that would be reproduced by positivism and quasi-positivism that declare the realm of moral as the sphere of

4. For a detailed discussion on the necessary unethicality of the ethical in Kant see Azeri 2018.

metaphysics and independent from realm of reason (regardless of considering it as meaningless or meaningful).

Crude materialism, by ignoring activity and the consequent historicity of social nature, arrives in physicalism and physical reductionism. As stated above, a further step in this direction will be positivism. Both crude materialism and positivism, thus, arrive at a *cul-de-sac* because they are looking for the material conditions of thought and contemplation in the wrong place, that is, in the brain or in the skull, whereas those condition lie elsewhere—outside of the individual, in the world (Ilyenkov 1997, 24).

Looked at from a medical-scientific point of view, thought or thinking *is* cerebral activity, but philosophically this is far from resolving the question of the identity of thought and matter. A philosophical stance that does not transcend the boundaries of physiological account of the identity of thought and matter is not (intelligent) materialism anymore as it ignores the social universe as the condition for the emergence of thinking. As stated above, the agent of thought is the human person and not the "I," neither the Reason, nor the brain.

Furthermore, it is not even the person *himself/herself* that thinks individually but only the social individual: "Taken out of the surrounding world and placed in the vacuum of abstraction a man is just as incapable of thinking as a brain excised from the human body and placed in a solution of formalin" (Ilyenkov 1997, 25). Obviously, it is human being in unity with nature that is the agent of thought; s/he thinks with the aid of her brain; however, the unity with nature is mediated by the unity with society; it is only the human person in unity with social collectivity that produces the material and spiritual life who is capable of thinking; there can be no thinking outside the nexus of social relations.

From the activity materialism perspective, contemplation is not a direct contact of the thinking person and nature; thinking nature is possible only through the mediation of praxis, labour, and production; it is here that the true unity between the thinking subject and material object is attained. Through production (labour), where the term is understood in its broadest sense, the object of nature is transformed into an object contemplation (Ilyenkov 1997, 26). This means that there can be no knowledge prior to changing the object, that is, no knowledge without containerizing the object of knowledge as a historically determinate object. Hence follows the dual sense of Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: since there is no knowledge without changing the object, without concretizing it, those views that insist on contemplative stance are "ideological" as they ignore

the historical determinations of the act of knowing and of knowledge-production and thus naturalize and ontologize it. Therefore, they arrive at conservatism and fetishize knowledge—in contemporary capitalist world they fetishize and deify science. Furthermore, once the historicity of knowledge-production is admitted, one is provided with the conditions of asking why knowing happens in this particular way? In other words, there emerges the possibility of analyzing the "how" of knowledge-production process and its historically determinate form; such an analysis yields revolutionary praxis as it opens up the path for a critical engagement with the exiting mode of production (of knowledge). Marx and Engels express this succinctly when stating that "Even the objects of the simplest 'sensuous certainty' are only given to [the subject of knowledge] through social development, industry and commercial intercourse" (Marx & Engels 1976, 39).

Materialistically conceived, the unity of thought and reality signifies the permanent transformation of reality into thought and of thought into reality through the mediation of human activity. In the face of reality as the condition, material, and means of activity, humans constitute representations or concepts that are form of human activity objectivized or the form of the object of activity subjectivized, which signifies the process of transformation of reality into thought. In response to the emergence of this new form of objectivity and subjectivity (that are construed through the mediation of social activity), new forms of activity is conceived of, which, logically speaking, signifies the stage of transformation of thought into reality (noting that these two movements are inseparable and can be isolated only in the abstract). It is only in practice that the essence reveals itself because it is only in practice that the changes imposed on the thing-in-itself can be revealed; only if one knows what the object *is* and *how* it is what it is one can determine what it *has been*—it is "the human anatomy that contains a key to the anatomy of ape" (Marx 1993, 105).

Given the identity of thought and reality, of thinking and activity, we can conclude that the presumed dichotomy between mind and heart, reason and emotions, (scientific) intellect and morality is illusory as these allegedly discrete elements are forms of appearance of the historically specific activity of human being as a psycho-physical unity. This pseudo-dichotomy is the expression of the subordination of human species to the products of its own activity, in this case the subordination of the species to science and morality, which originally were devised as means serving the well-being and happiness of the human species. Neither Hiroshima and Nagasaki nor Hitler's gas chambers, nor the continuous nuclear threat are

accidental by-products of science just as cyclic financial and "overproduction" crises are not accidental features of capitalism. Holocaust and nuclear extermination are not products of "sick" minds or morally degenerated scientists—introduction of moral scales that would enlighten such "base" minds to the effect of preventing the reoccurrence of such atrocities might appear as a remedy to naïve humanists only. Immoral science and ignorant morality are the two sides of the same coin issued by the capitalist relations of production; they are necessary forms of realization of intellectual activity and moral conduct subsumed under capital. Proposals for "fixing" these "defects," such as Hegel's or positivists', which idealistically construe the identity of thought and being, or like Kant's who treats this divide as real and the gap as unbridgeable are non-solutions. The former amounts to a theory of sanctification of the existing state of affairs via deification of the intellect/mind, the latter amounts to an ethical theory of ineffective moral imperatives, which, despite the author's good intensions, guarantee the reoccurrence of evil. "The ambulance of theory arrives on the scene much too late" because theory ignores the source and essence of the catastrophe.

The practical critique of the capitalist relations of production is the necessary condition for the constitution of an authentic humane science and a truly humanist morality and ethics as the two forms of expression of the consciousness of historical humanity and its world. Such critique is the core of the communist program as authentic humanism: "Man, the living human being, not money, nor machines, nor products or any form of 'wealth,' is the highest value and the 'creator-subject' of all 'alienated' forms" (Ilyenkov 1991).

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The first issue of the second volume of the *Marxism & Sciences* is devoted to questions related to the theoretical and philosophical foundations of Marxism considered from an Ilyenkovian perspective. Corinna Lotz's contribution titled "A Theory and Practice of Cognition for Our Time: Building on Ilyenkov's Dialectical Logic" aims for developing a theory of cognition, i.e., of conscious thinking, that is based on Marx's thesis that the genuine task before philosophy, in contradistinction to the assumptions of philosophical tradition, is changing the world. Drawing on Lenin and Ilyenkov's readings of Hegel, Lotz argues that a materialist dialectical theory of cognition should always have revolutionary transformation in view; in other words, Lotz attempts to conceive a connection between some theoretical/epistemological issues concerning cognition (as understood in theory of

knowledge and the sciences) and (contemporary) political conflicts and struggles. To this end, she draws on, particularly, Ilyenkov's concept of the "ideal." Beside elaborating on some fundamental dialectical categories such as "self-movement," "contradiction," "becoming" (vs. being), and "negation of negation," a crucial and original aspect that comes to the fore in this article is the pivotal role ascribed to the concept of the "ideal" in explaining the passage from mere sensation to transformative cognition and revolutionary action—the passage from the abstract to the concrete. "This concept of the 'Ideal' helps us grasp how the Ideals, passing into the real, become an objectively real social force, crucial as Lenin said, 'for individuals and for history.' This means exercising our ability to develop concrete dialectical concepts" (Lotz 2023, 68).

In the article titled "Time=Money: The Notion of the Ideal Applied to Physics" Joost Kircz, while challenging the present day one-way approach to the relation between different fields of knowledge-production where human and social sciences borrow terms and concepts from natural sciences, attempts to actualize such a practical criticism of the mode of production of knowledge through applying the notion of the "ideal" in physics and stipulating "time" as the measure of ideal change in physics as a counterpart to money as the measure of value. "I want to illustrate my claim that the Ideal can be used in physics with the universal notion of 'change.' To be precise, I consider 'change' to be an Ideal" (Kircz 2023, 26). To this end, Kircz argues that apart from the problem of the haecceity of time, usually the notion of time as measure of movement and change is conflated with time as a physical thing; this confusion is reminiscent of conflating value and money (Ibid., 27).

In justifying his complex argument and sophisticated account, Kircz follows a dual path: on the one hand, he analyzes a number of fundamental concepts of materialist philosophy, particularly certain categories that Ilyenkov, following Marx and Engels, elaborates on and develops further, such as the very concept "materialism," the role of models in materialist philosophy and specifically in Ilyenkov's system, concepts of "matter" and "thought" as attributes of Nature, the nature of knowledge and knowing (see, for instance, the section Knowing as Activity), and value and money. On the other hand, he focuses on the concept of time scrutinizing the various ways it has been deployed in physical theories—time as the absolute measure of motion, time as a category in classical mechanics in contradistinction to the notion of time in relativity physics, the relation between concepts of time and space, and the changes the conceptualization of this

relation has undergone through the development of physical theories. Kircz concludes his argument by demonstrating the close connection between the notion of time as the linear universal measure that has emerged only after the Newtonian revolution which coincides with the period when money and value were equated (2003, 46). The changes in social formation and the mode of human activity, it is argued, will bring about the possibility of conceiving of better and more universal measures than time and money despite the fact that these measures still serve us well when considered pragmatically. Ilyenkov's philosophical method and the conceptual stockpile he provides us with, Kircz argues, enable us to transcend the existing conceptual horizon by enlivening the notions that are still at their rudimental level of existence and not yet operational in computational forms; this, he contends, is "an important argument against the bizarre, essentially sadistic, dreams of so-called clever, and fundamentally mechanical, artificial intelligence" (2003, 47).

In his article titled "Marxism, from Ideology to Science: Evald Ilyenkov and His Contribution to Marxist Thought" Alexander Surmava contextualizes the contributions of Evald Ilyenkov to Marxian materialism and materialist dialectics within the framework of contemporary political and theoretical debates in "Marxist" circles and aims for singling out Ilyenkov's original viewpoints concerning building a "scientific" materialist dialectics in contrast to "ideology." He provides an overview of Evald Ilyenkov's intellectual development against the background of the academic, intellectual and sociopolitical environment in the Soviet Union. Surmava argues that Marxism has been degenerated from a scientific dialectical philosophy into an ideology. Accordingly, despite Ilyenkov's great effort to re-establish Marxism as a critical science, he did not succeed to complete his project, which is based on a revolutionary re-evaluation of Spinoza's philosophy in relation to the teachings of Marx and Engels.

Surmava addresses a whole series of topics that are vital, as he proposes, in constituting Marxism as a true revolutionary theory of scientific criticism. Among these are the contradistinction between science and ideology with reference to their modes and contents of thinking, the subject they put before themselves in order to study and their stance with regard to criticism. In this sense, Surmava states,

> One of the most striking differences between science and ideology is that the scientific approach assumes that both the subject and its theoretical reflection can develop, so it has an essentially critical view of things. On the contrary, ideology, being inherently a system of ideas aimed at maintaining a favourable

> status quo for those in power, is not compatible with any kind of self-criticism. (Surmava 2023, 86)

Surmava further goes on to analyze Ilyenkov's philosophical odyssey and the development of his thought, who, accordingly, succeeded in bringing back the essence of revolutionary, scientific criticism into Marxian materialism and critique drawing on Spinoza's genuine, scientific thinking.

Jarek Ervin in his article "Ideology, False Consciousness, and Beyond: The Marxian Critique of Ideation" discusses a major question within Marxist studies: the relation between the relations of production and the process of the formation of ideas and ideologies. The author aims to show that 1. Rather than considering the aforementioned relation between ideology and the so-called economic substructure, it would be more appropriate to use the concept of "ideation" as an umbrella term that 2. Appears in form of the six concepts: alienation, mystification, commodity fetishism, social consciousness, ideology, and false consciousness.

By "ideation" Ervin signifies the process of idea-formation or idea-production. This aspect of the article is related to Marx and Engels' arguments against the attitude that concerns thought as a separate substance; as something standing by itself. Idealism, in the sense of ascribing substantial independence to thought, is a specific form of appearance of fetishism. Furthermore, fetishism, as ascription of independence (from human activity) to commodities is a specific form of idealism (as if commodities have a life of their own and get into social relations with each other). Hence, the importance of the passage concerning the production of (dominant) ideology in *The German Ideology* that in each era the dominant ideology is that of the dominant class because, like the means of material (physical) production, they also own the means of "ideological" production: this does not mean that Marx and Engels consider a causal relation between sub- and superstructure, but that ideas, as much as physical things, are produced. Since there is no "production in general," ideas too, as products, are subject to and determined by the relations of production—they acquire the form of these relations and become their carriers.

Analyzing "alienation," "mystification," "commodity fetishism," "social consciousness," "ideology," and "false consciousness" as six intertwined moments of the capitalist production process of ideas, Ervin concludes that despite lack of a single definitive monograph by Marx and Engels that would directly address the questions raised in this article, there is sufficient resources and material left behind by the founders of Marxism

to articulate a comprehensive account of social consciousness and the process of ideation. Accordingly, Marx and Engels' analysis of the relation between the relations of production and the process of the formation of consciousness "allows us to conceive of capitalism as a totality, both as an integrating form of socio-economic life and a dynamic, multifaceted system. More than merely constraining consciousness, economics contribute to conscious activity in myriad ways" (Ervin 2023, 132).

Nikolaos Folinas, in the article titled "Beyond Instrumentality: Marx's Production Process in *Capital* and Ilyenkov's Methodological Aspects" argues for the "materiality" of the "ideal" in Ilyenkov's conception of materialist dialectics. To this end, the author focuses on the process of production as a sphere where the ideal is materially produced. By focusing on the labour process and cooperation as two significant moments of the process of production, Folinas aims to reveal the "materiality" in the production process, as explained by Marx, using Ilyenkov's concept of the "ideal." On this basis, Folinas also intends to respond to "criticisms" concerning Marx's instrumental understanding of the labour process (a line of criticism that is represented by, among others, Jurgen Habermas). To this end, Folinas focuses on the concept of "human activity" in Ilyenkov's writings in order to 1. Contrasting "activity materialism" to "somatic" or "substantialist" materialisms; 2. Which paves the way for a materialist analysis of the category of consciousness. Furthermore, Folinas analyzes the production process as presented by Marx in *Capital Vol. 1* in order to clarify the concept of the ideal; he further contextualizes Ilyenkov's criticism of positivism and his conceptualization of the dialectics of the abstract and the concrete to reveal certain aspects of his concept of the ideal. In this context, Folinas attempts to demonstrate how the material production process is ideal and how cooperation, as a material method of production and extraction of (relative) surplus value contributes to the development of the concept of the ideal (with value being the paradigmatic example of the ideal). A particular outcome of the article, thus, is revealing the relevance and centrality of the concept of labour for a better understanding of the problematic nature of capitalist work and social conditions.

In his captivating essay titled "Homo Datum and Socialized Cybernetics: Emerging Contours of the Latest Phase of Capitalism" Arto Artinian takes on the problem of inhuman essence of capitalism—the inhumane capitalist civil society in contrast to human society—in relation to the rise of "digital social objects" and "Homo Datum." The emergence of Homo

Datum as the consequence of conversion of political subjectivity into digital social objectness is the manifestation of an omnipresent tendency in capitalism toward "thingification" (an essentially Ilyenkovian notion, as the author emphasizes). As the specific form of commodity (data), "DSOs represent a new form of dehumanization"—individuals posited as instantiations of digital social objects, while the political is posited as "socialized cybernetics" (Artinian 2023, 158).

Artinian goes on to argue that the former capitalist epoch is defined as the period of "generalized proletarianization" where this latter signifies decapacitation and loss of meaning of the political subjectivity accompanied by record growth in productivity versus reduced wages, the enlarging of the gulf between productive sectors of capital and fictitious capital, and the general devaluation and lowered quality of education. The generalized proletarianization and the rise of cybernetics amount to the emergence of a humanity that is shaped by the ideology of social cybernetics and "transformed into a biological being with human capacities (BBHC)" (Ibid., 160). This situation is the culmination of a potentiality that has always existed in capitalism: the tendency to reduce human being into an automaton (or the process of zombification) through means as diverse as material production to formal education, and which has been fiercely criticized by Ilyenkov. Devoid of their agency and being zombified, humans are reduced to a set of elementary capacities "geared towards simple, automated existence, usage-structures in a social sandbox" (Ibid., 161).

The new social relations under capitalism in this new phase are mediated by data as "particular form of sense-making for the social [...] with datum, there is mostly movement of *objects* within the political, rather than citizens" (Ibid., 162), let alone human beings. This situation signifies a new form of appearance of fetishism under capitalist relations where the relation between data appears as social relations and relation between people as one between data—digital fetishism.

The transformation of human subjectivity into BBHC is a leap in creating a humanity after the image of capital: if with the introduction of large scale industry and machinery human body, and consequently human mind, had become an appendage to the machine—the constant capital—now the very human mind, dear to bourgeois philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Descartes for being responsible for the humanness of human being, is not only imagined but also constituted as a moment of socialized cybernetics the intellectual activity of which has been drastically reduced to me-

chanical, algorithmic compilation of data. Hence, "the emerging functioning of the generalized proletariat as *maximally aligned with other constitutive digital objects* of the current phase of capitalism" (Ibid., 163)—a shift that redefines "what it means to be human."

Artinian concludes with posing the question "what is to be done?" in face of the actual dystopia created by the capitalist relations of production? He draws on Ilyenkov's analysis and criticism of cybernetics of his day back in 1960s that emphasizes and is rooted in Marxist fomulation of and answering the question concerning the meaning of being human. Such criticism provides the fundamental elements for a practical critique and the consequent demolishing of "Homo Datum pseudo-subjectivity" (ibid., 164). This means the "formation of a society of fully developed human beings, and not stunted, zero-dimensional humanoid objects, referenced through digital computing network" (ibid., 164), that is, a communist society. In short, the answer is the practical criticism of capitalist society and its mind, the limit of which is civil society, with the aim of constituting human society or social humanity.

This issue also includes a number of invaluable short interviews with prominent figures in Marxist critical thought: Vladislav Lektorsky, Glenn Rikowski, Hans-Peter Krüger, Katerina Kolozova and Andy Blunden are the interviewees of this issue. Similarly, the Cultural Works Section of this issue presents an installation about the means of production and labor by Burhan Yılmaz and a review of performance on Ilyenkov by Dennis Schnieber.

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The articles, interviews, and artworks included in this issue are part of a response to fundamental questions in relation to Marxist theory and practice and altogether, as much as individually, they constitute a substantial contribution to the foundations of Marxist theory.

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