

PRAXIS AS A SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPT

By

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## ABSTRACT

On the assumption that "praxis" should and could be, but is not yet a meaningful working concept of sociology, the argument is directed to initiating the search for an appropriate meaning of praxis from amongst those meanings existing (implicitly or explicitly) in social/political theories. The question of the meaning(s) of praxis is approached on the basis of the argument that praxis is an all-encompassing concept; i.e., its meaning is inseparable from, and therefore encompassing of, an underlying theoretical structure. The argument implies, therefore, a correct strategy for finding an appropriate praxis for sociology: one which exposes the "constitutive assumptions"--the ontological, epistemological, and axiological components--within which the particular concept is couched. The argument, therefore, challenges the commonly held assumption (in sociology) that praxis is synonymous with Marxist critical/humanist philosophy.

Two normative concepts of praxis--the alternatives to the scientific Marxist concept which the thesis argues for--are discussed (and "tested" in the substantive context of the social program, newSTART) and are evaluated as being inappropriate concepts to inform a praxis sociology. Arendt's normative concept, however, is deemed adequate as a philosophical concept and does serve as a plausible alternative to praxis as a scientific sociological concept. Habermas's concept of praxis is introduced because it provides a theoretically credible challenge to Arendt's concept and also offers a viable concept for sociology; but because it is (arguably) couched in a "normative theory of efficiency", it is located within a functionalist sociological paradigm, thus undermining the potential of praxis to express its emancipatory content in meaningful social action.

The theoretical structure of a Marxist science is taken as the correct starting point for the formation of a praxis sociology because it is the only existing model that can challenge Arendt's philosophical praxis while retaining the potential to express the meaningfulness of praxis. However, because of the determinism inherent in this position, which results in a conflation of teleology with axiology, its potential to express the meaningful content of praxis as human agency is negated. This, however, is only a transient "failure" of Marxist science, and two further theoretical positions are outlined--in the work of Carchedi and Bhaskar--which promise to rectify the shortcomings of the scientific Marxist approach and establish a valid concept of praxis.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The general purpose of this thesis is to discuss the meaning(s) of the concept "praxis" in the context of its intellectual tradition and contemporary use, the meaning of "praxis" in the context of sociological research, and the meaning of "praxis" in the context of "social action programming". The study is intended to be a continuation of, and a modest contribution to, "a research paradigm openly committed to critiquing the status quo" (Lather, 1986) through the formation of "an emancipatory social science" (Benson, 1977). The central problem of the study is how the various meanings of praxis (the interpretations of and the problems associated with) can give rise to, and have a direct bearing on, the meaning of a praxis oriented (or guided) sociology and subsequently how this can lead to variations in the descriptive (in the area of analysis) and prescriptive (in the area of social action programming) outcomes of "praxis sociology". Underscoring the stated purpose, intention, and central problem of the study, is the assumption that the concept of "praxis" should be, but as of yet is not, securely rooted in the discipline of sociology. Further to this, a "critical" and concise theory guided strategy is needed to achieve this end. In this regard, the thesis is seen to proceed by way of three levels of analysis. First, by examining the concept of "praxis" within the first context (as above) the fundamental ontological, epistemological and axiological commitments of the positions (traditions) are brought to the forefront and critically and comparatively analyzed. Second, by examining the variations of these "commitments" within the second context (as above), and bringing to light the possible "constitutive assumptions" of "praxis" sociology(s), problems of "interpretation", "commensurability" etc. are addressed. Third, within the third context (as above) and by way of introducing the case study (i.e. the newSTART program), the "praxis"



formulations are examined as to their explanatory adequacy (that is, the meaning(s) they ascribe to events and their contribution to this end) and further, their ability to act (and the way in which they do so) as a guiding principle(s) for social action programming of this sort.

The impetus for this project comes as a result of a number of concerns that can be attributed to the theoretical curiosities that I have observed during the search for an appropriate "sociological" meaning of praxis, and questions that have arisen during the course of my everyday experience which have left me returning to "praxis" to seek the theoretical explanations for them. The thesis represents an attempted synthesis of these two realms of activity, the theoretical and the practical, into a meaningful sociological dialogue - one which will begin to substantiate a long held intuition (and more recently, a growing visible effort in sociology) that the concept of "praxis" is more important to the discipline than the attention given it would seem to suggest, particularly within North American sociology. But if this is so, then the task is really one of bringing the concept into sociology's "disciplinary matrix" (Kuhn, 1970) as a working concept of sociological inquiry. Such a task must be approached with considerable caution; otherwise, as the example of the sociological use of "alienation" shows us (i.e. its "operationalization" by Middleton, et al.), the concept can not only lose, in and for itself, its ability to capture unique phenomena within sociology's disciplinary matrix and its capacity to serve as a theoretical basis for social action programming, but it can lead to a loss of an otherwise rich potential sociological concept to philosophy and/or the behavioristic social sciences.

The implicit task of importing the concept of "praxis" into sociology does not therefore proceed, in this thesis, on the assumption that the concept of "praxis" must be somehow made to "fit" a current mode of sociological inquiry

or, on the other hand, that it can be left to slip innocuously into sociological dialogue without some form of formal and critical address. Rather the concept must be approached directly, critically and dialectically as a prelude to establishing it as a working concept of sociological inquiry. Although consummation of this task itself is clearly beyond the scope of this thesis, the thesis represents what, after an extended search of "options", I argue to be the correct starting point for initiating the task.

The reader should view the thesis as a "sketch" of what is currently held by philosophy, the social sciences, and Marxism (the three bodies of thought that are "battling" for possession of the concept) to be true for "praxis" (its meaning) and a limited, but more in-depth, excursion into what "praxis" means as it is currently used in sociological discourse, and therefore, a limited declaration of what it could mean for sociology.

The thesis raises, but does not thoroughly pursue, a number of questions which have served as the impetus for this inquiry. The effort to establish "praxis" as a working concept of sociological inquiry is, in no uncertain terms, an effort to establish an alternative approach to both what sociology is and what it should be. As such, the subject matter of this thesis implicitly raises a rather large question that has underlain sociology and continues to stimulate much debate: what is sociology, or more to the point, what should it be? "What it is" does not appear to sit comfortably with a large number of sociologists, a point evidenced by the plethora of writings in the area of the "sociology of sociology". Although this is a question that has stimulated much theoretical debate, "praxis" as an alternative theoretical approach, is not pursued in this thesis as a vehicle to be used for a theoretical foray against "traditional" sociological positions. Rather, it is raised as a theoretical position and pursued as an alternative approach from a point of view instigated by my own practical and experiential realm of life,

specifically, as a result of being on the receiving end of a number of (presumably) "theoretically" informed social programs and interventions. If I may be allowed a biographical note, this point of view may become clearer.

What led me to university in the first place and slowly streamed me into sociology was the question of by what authority this or that social intervention (or program) could be implemented, particularly when it was against the "client's" will. Since that time the question has become increasingly focused so that authority has been replaced by "this" or "that" theoretical/philosophical/normative etc. underpinning which informs "this" or "that" formal or institutionalized social practice. At the same time my perspective has been broadened from one of "self" to one of "class". However what remains unchanged is that from the perspective of the individual social actor, institutionalized social practices are of two kinds: either one is treated as an object - impersonally, dehumanizingly and coldly - or one drowns in a sea of "informed" patronizing liberal sentiment and "empathy". Either way, one is stripped of his/her self-respect, free expression as a unique individual actor, and dignity as a human being sharing the common human condition. In the language of sociology/philosophy, the point of view I am expressing is one which argues that "positivism" (and its methodological variants) is the source (i.e. theoretical/philosophical/normative etc. underpinnings) of "scientistic" social practices while "subjectivism" (and its methodological variants) is the source of "empathic" social practices. Both are unacceptable as the "underpinnings" of social praxis. From the point of view of "praxis", the erosion of one of these positions (via criticism) inevitably leads to the bolstering of the other while the general methodological attitude they both share - that theory and practice are two distinct dimensions of life - is held intact. In constructing a "praxis sociology" both must be regarded as "myths" if the cause of "emancipation", "criticism", and human dignity is to be served. Inevitably one

is led back into the theoretical to establish and communicate this point but only as a means of clearing the way for what is "practical", "critical" and "emancipatory" (i.e. "praxical").

It is admittedly a bold claim to suggest, as this thesis does, that sociology should explicitly serve the "cause" of emancipation" and that it has the means to be able to do so. Nevertheless this is clearly implied in the very idea of a "praxis sociology"; an approach which is beginning to take hold in the discipline. "Praxis" sociology, it is suggested in this thesis, represents a point of departure from most mainstream ideas of what sociology is and what it is supposed to achieve. Nevertheless it can be constructed within a theoretical space that has been carved out by social theorists and as such is not as "radical" as it may first appear. It is, or, as this thesis argues, ought to be, constructed on the theoretical foundations of a position that has long established sociology as a unique discipline amidst the other humanities and social sciences. In a sense, it is an alternative position, but it is also a reaffirmation of the fact that the theoretical/philosophical foundations of sociology have been successfully carved out and established (albeit in need of re-structuring or clarifying). It should not be understood as aligned with a "counter-movement" in sociology, wherein authority in any form is regarded as obtrusive on the sociological imagination, with the result that "anything goes" (Rose, 1979).

A number of current "sociological" praxis positions (in various stages of construction) that are touched on in this paper would (unwittingly or by design) surrender the concept of "praxis" to the domain of "philosophy" - since their effort to synthesize various unexamined assumptions leave them on shaky grounds. Others, by uncritically accepting the supremacy of "scientific" methodology (i.e. positivism), would reduce "praxis" to a working concept of the behavioral sciences. Either way, the concept is devalued, and because a

number of these positions claim to be "sociological", the disciplinary parameters which have been sought and defended by a vast number of prominent thinkers have been weakened. Thus, this thesis takes a critical approach in its articulation and defence of a traditional theoretical basis for a praxis sociology through the re-interpreting of those same theoretical foundations.

In keeping with these concerns and questions, I begin the analysis in Chapter Two with a brief genealogy of praxis intellectual history for the purpose of locating the specific argument of this thesis within the broader debate that surrounds the "praxis problem". From here I proceed to explore, organize and articulate the "taken for granted" assumptions of three "traditional" theoretical structures within which "praxis" can be understood. These assumptions are organized around the questions of ontology, epistemology, and axiology. (see Appendix A for the working definition of these terms)

Having established the diversity of these assumptions, Chapter Three examines the key assumptions of each "praxis" by bringing them into focus with questions that are more germane to sociology. In other words, the thesis progresses from the meta-theoretical questions examined in Chapter Two, to those questions that are of concern to "real" action in the "real" world. The insights of the different "praxis" perspectives are counterposed, giving rise to their inherent differences and conflicting insights. In this way, a better understanding of "praxis" is revealed and the beginnings of an appropriate theoretical structure for a praxis sociology are seen to emerge.

Chapter Four presents a critical analysis of the "ex-offender" self-help program known as newSTART. The newSTART program (as outlined in Appendix B) is confronted by the "praxes", not for the purpose of stating conclusively which is more correct, but for the purpose of yielding insights that may be useful to the eventual purpose of constructing a "praxis" sociology. The analysis is organized around the following problem.

As a result of my work with the newSTART project it became increasingly apparent that there is (as far as I know) neither a theoretical basis for describing an organization such as newSTART as progressive, nor any theoretical guidelines for constructing it along the lines of an "emancipatory" social action program. Whether or not this is, should, or need be the case is something the thesis addresses vis-a-vis "praxis". Whether "praxis" is adequate to this task, and, conversely, whether newSTART is adequate to the task of "praxis" is a question that underlies the analysis in Chapter Four.

Two general questions serve, then, to focus the analysis of Chapter Four: the first is directed to the question of "descriptive" adequacy; the second, to the question of "prescriptive" adequacy.

1. Drawing from the theoretical section of the thesis can it be said in any specific or general way that newSTART had/was a "praxis"? If so was it intentional? If not, should this be attributed to an inadequacy in the theoretical structure of "praxis", or to a problem within the substantive structure of newSTART?
2. How, if at all, could a notion of "praxis" be used to guide a program such as newSTART.

The concluding section of the thesis, Chapter Five, proposes a starting point for a sociologically appropriate conceptualization of praxis. This starting point takes into account the insights gathered from the discussion of the competing theoretical structures in Chapter Two, the issues of social theory brought into focus in Chapter Three, and the confrontation of "praxis" with newSTART - the theoretical with the substantive - as illustrated in Chapter Four.

## II. THE COMPETING THEORETICAL STRUCTURES OF PRAXIS

### A Brief Genealogy of Praxis

The concept of "praxis" dates back at least as far as Greek philosophy. Since that time it has undergone various permutations (in both meaning and theoretical use) at the hands of a veritable "who's who" of philosophical thinkers and "Marxist" theorists. Particularly rich periods in the concept's development were: Greek thought (Aristotle); 19th Century German thought (beginning with Kant, through Hegel and including the "young Hegelians"); and, "contemporary" German thought (Rockmore, 1978). Marx, himself, rarely used the term and never provided a definition of the concept. Nevertheless, the concept has been developed in the secondary Marxist literature as if it were a central concept of Marx's thought and according to what is viewed as the "implied meaning" found in his writings (Lobkowitz, 1967). Two of the "praxes" discussed in this thesis are inherently Marxist. The others, like so much of contemporary Western social thought (since Marx), have developed within the "watershed" of Marx's thought.

Further, each "praxis" position denotes, and builds upon, decisive events in both social and intellectual/philosophical history and places the concept within a particular stream of ideas that has sprung forth. Thus the proponents of each of the praxis positions discussed in this paper are protagonists for the many great thinkers whose ideas have endured well beyond their time. As a prelude to the analysis of the "praxes" (and in the order that they are addressed in the following chapter), it is useful to place each idea of "praxis" in its historical context. In this regard, the following can be said of each.

In "praxis"-1<sup>1</sup> we see "classical"/"archaic" philosophical thought art-

fully resurrected by Hannah Arendt, neither for its own sake nor to detract from the great wealth of ideas that Marx and his contemporaries (particularly German idealists against who her position is set) thrust into intellectual history. Rather, it is resurrected in the expressed hope that man can, when guided by a "universal" ethos, recapture his political being in the activity of "praxis" in the face of the "theoretical glorification of labour (which) has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole of society into a labouring society" (Arendt, 1958:4). She warns that such a lamentable human condition of the modern age is susceptible to the intrusion of "scientific" and "technical knowledge into an otherwise political realm" (Ibid).

In "praxis"-2 we see the concept of "praxis" developed within the argument that Marxism is first and foremost a "critical" and "humanistic" philosophy. It thus represents, so to speak, one side of the Marxist methodological coin. Drawing heavily on German idealism and Marx's debate with its main protagonist, Hegel, it emphasizes the early works of Marx - but not to develop this philosophy for its own sake (i.e. as speculative and passive). Rather, the intellectual stream which underlies the current (albeit "traditional") understanding of this "praxis" began in response to a somber period in the evolution of Marxism - i.e. the official repressions of Stalinism (Anderson, 1978: 50) - and the "re-discovery" of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts allowed for the construction of an active "humanist" methodology within the richness of this discovery.

In "praxis"-3 we see the other Marxist concept of "praxis" (and the other side of the methodological coin) evolving from an understanding of "Marxism" which upholds the idea of an "epistemological break" in Marx's thought, placing the early "philosophical writings" of Marx in the pre-history of Marxism, and which develops "praxis" within the context of Marx's "mature" thought, i.e. as an "economic category" within the science of society (which



Marx thoroughly articulated in his later works, particularly, Capital).

As rich an intellectual history as each of these "praxeses" represents, and as old as the events are which provoked their respective theoretical meanings, each is held to be contemporary both in meaning and theoretical usage. They are "contemporary" insofar as the concept itself, and the tradition in which each is couched is still argued as being useful for, and appropriate to, the understanding of contemporary social/political problems. Each "praxis" is still the subject of much debate. In one way or another, all three "praxeses" (either implicitly/explicitly, descriptively and/or normatively) are directed toward two goals: contributing to an understanding of what it means to live a "truly full and human life" and contributing to an understanding of how social action, and in certain cases, social action programming, should or can be ordered to this end. In other words, these "praxeses" do have a commonality, namely, to illustrate the importance of "praxis" as a tool for understanding the world, and actively changing it.

### The Traditional Philosophical Concept of Praxis

#### A. Aristotle<sup>2</sup>

According to Aristotle, there are three categories of human activity: "poiesis" (making, production or labor), "praxis" (political action or activity), and "theoria" (thinking or contemplation). "Praxis" is a "high" order activity because it presupposes that man is free of any activity associated with "poiesis". The further one is removed from the "animal realm" (i.e "poiesis"), the more the activity is esteemed. "Praxis" is therefore an activity of the "leisure" class whereas "poiesis" is that of "animal laborans". Political activity is the "realm of freedom" because it is free of "necessity" and as such is a "truly human activity".

The concern of "praxis" is the "felicity" or "happiness" of the "polis" and its "end" public "goodness". Acting in association with other "citizens" of the polis, "praxis" (political activity) may produce laws and other "instruments of public virtue". Knowledge in the realm of "praxis" is acquired by "engaging" in "praxis". The realm of "praxis" is distinct and autonomous from that of "theoria". Therefore, there can be no theoretical knowledge of politics. The theorist (i.e. philosopher), being removed from the realm of "praxis", engages in the act of "pure" contemplation in an effort to understand the world ("theoria" being an end in itself), while in the realm of "praxis" (i.e. the "polis"), men, in a forum of dialogue and persuasion, attempt to "change" the world; that is, to ethicize it (Lobkowitz, 1967; also 1977).

We have then, according to Aristotle, three distinct and autonomous activities - labor, politics, and contemplation. Corresponding to these activities are three autonomous and therefore unbridgeable realms of knowledge - mundane, ethical and theoretical (respectively). This distinction, as we see, is upheld by Hannah Arendt and forms the basis for her articulation of a "contemporary" understanding of "praxis".

It is Arendt's argument that because political activity is distinct from labor, it is the meaningful dimension of human existence and is therefore "praxis". Further, because the gap between politics and contemplation (and ethical and theoretical knowledge, respectively) is unbridgeable, "praxis" cannot be theory guided. Consequently, "praxis" is not properly the subject of social theory.

#### B. Hannah Arendt

For Arendt, the concept of "praxis" is synonymous with "action" and, as she states it, "...to 'be' free and to act are basically the same thing"

(Arendt, in Bernstein, 1977: 146). When she refers to "action" she is therefore referring to "free action", that is, to "praxis". To realize the full meaning of Arendt's "praxis", it is important to understand that her notion of "praxis" is expressed as a political category. Consequently, we are led to conceptualize "praxis" as a general mode of being as opposed to existence.<sup>3</sup> It is then necessarily an a priori concept, its meaning constituted by, and thus dependent upon, a systematic web of concepts which in unity express her philosophical position. Accordingly, her meaning and use of the concept argues from the point of view of an unrelenting philosophical bias, but more importantly, it expresses an effort to place the subject matter of "praxis" firmly in the fold of philosophical discourse.

A further result of framing "praxis" within a political category is that any question concerning the general validity of her "praxis" construction is directed either "inward" toward the internal logic of her system of concepts or "outward" toward the general philosophical position which supports the "internal" system. Further, because "praxis" is couched within a conceptual system (as a category), it is an idealized notion of human action as opposed to a "descriptive" one. As such, Arendt aspires to distance the concept from "science" and subsequently from "scientific" measures bent on "testing" the validity of her notion of "social" action within and against the "empirical" world.

A central claim upon which Arendt's "praxis" construction rests is that "labor" and "action" (praxis) are two distinct and mutually exclusive domains of human activity. It is, as the following outline of her position shows, a claim that rests on a single epistemological premise which produces two distinct "ontologies"- a "descriptive" one and a "normative" one or, an ontology of "labor", and an "ontology" of "praxis", respectively.

According to Arendt, unless we count ourselves as gods, human nature remains forever unknowable ["... only a god can know and define it..." (Arendt, 1958: 10)]. We are, so to speak, limited by our secularity to seek only the "essential characteristics of human existence in the sense that without them this existence would no longer be human" (Ibid, 1958: 10). From this point of view, Arendt observes that human beings participate in two lives - biological and political - through the activities of labor (and work) and action ("praxis"), respectively. If, as Aristotle suggests, "man is something in between wild beasts and gods", then Arendt (like Aristotle) is contrasting "man's animal with his godlike features" (Lobkowitz, 1967: 27). Labor, she argues, is a manifestation of biological necessity - a "condition of life" pointing to our existence as "animal laborans" (or "beasts"). It is a response to a universally held need, a need shared by virtue of our "animal" nature. It is therefore a behavioral/biological response - no more, no less - and is not a manifestation of some aspect of human nature. "Labor" is observed to be a shared condition, but Arendt does not ascribe to the necessary task of labour any meaningful conditions that evolve from this sharing. In other words, labour is certainly not to be taken as a precursor to the first historical act of man/woman (i.e. "social organization of labour"): rather it is meaningless by virtue of it being necessary, mundane and "cyclical" across space and time (and thus ahistorical). Such are the basic tenets of Arendt's ontology of labour.

"Action" ("praxis") on the other hand is a mode of being which, by virtue of being free of the dictates of necessity, and therefore not of animal nature, is a truly "free" activity which points to (manifests) what is truly human in man/woman. Or as Aristotle would state it, "...to be a man is to be a 'political animal'; thus politics is both the human activity and the activity which distinguishes man from animals and subhumans, and from the gods." (Aristotle, in Lobkowitz, 1967: 27). Hence men are "free" when they act and

conversely act when they are free (of necessity). Because of this, action ("praxis") becomes by definition unpredictable. If ontology is understood as simply the question of "what is there?", then regarding the ontology of "praxis", the answer would be: all that can be said of man's animal nature (social, biological and domestic) is not of human nature, and as no fixed properties can be attributed to human nature, nothing can be said of human nature. This is clearly an empty proposition (i.e. tautological) but it is one which is left so by design. The reason is that Arendt's notion of "praxis" is a potential theory of "social action" (in this case "political" action) predicated on an idealized ethos and normative notion of "human nature". In other words, "praxis" (in this case) possesses no "descriptive" content to ascertain. It is not constructed upon an ontological premise (as is "labour") but is rather contrasted to the ontological premises of mundane activity. In this way, that is by the method of contrast, the "normative" basis of "praxis" is established (man/woman is, so to speak, forever in the process of "becoming"). Because of this, we are led to understand that "praxis" is not a matter for "social theory" but a matter for political philosophy.

As we move through Arendt's system of concepts seeking the meaningful content of "praxis" we are constantly reminded of the effort to establish (or re-affirm) "praxis" (and those concepts essential to its meaning) as a philosophical concept. As earlier stated, "freedom" is presented to us as a synonym for "praxis", but only if "praxis" is understood as being neither predictable nor expected ["...the new, therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle" (Arendt, 1958: 178)]. As "necessity" has already been dismissed (by Arendt) as the source or impetus of "praxis", and "novelty" (argued by Arendt) as a necessary "condition" of it, Arendt is really saying (at the broader level of argument) that neither any methodological variant of "necessity" (be it historical or biological) nor any "scientific" explanation of human behavior is

adequate to the task of comprehending and predicting human "praxis". More pointedly she is stating that "praxis" is neither the concern of Marxism nor the social sciences, respectively. Although this point is arguably the central one of her philosophy (it is implicit throughout it), it becomes increasingly focused as we move into the "abstract" realm of "praxis" - the "polis".

Arendt requires us to acknowledge, in order to arrive at an understanding of the "polis", two conditions. The first has to do with how we are to approach an understanding of the "polis" (i.e. a methodological pre-condition), and the second has to do with the "actual" conditions of "praxis" whereby their realisation "reveals the "polis" (i.e. conditions upon which "praxis" is predicated). As to the first condition, we are required to understand that the polis is, as Arendt states, "not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be" (1958: 198). True to Aristotle's "polis", it is a "... 'political' unit defined in terms of the members who constituted it" (Lobkowitz, 1967: 28). In effect, the "polis" is an idealized notion of politics as the "realm of free speech without which there can be no free action" (Tlaba, 1987: 39). To a certain extent, it is a metaphor for political association. It should not, Arendt urges, be confused with the realm of "social life" (the empirical realm of natural association). Pointing to the second condition (as above) an "action" is to be understood as transpiring in the "polis" (and thus the "polis" is revealed) when men coexist as "equal" and "distinct" (i.e. in "plurality") and reveal themselves in "speech" and "deeds". Under these conditions, "political power" is "actualized" and used to establish "new relations" and create "new realities". The "polis" then, does not exist per se (i.e. ontologically); rather it is an "ideal space" carved out by, and for, "praxis". It is a "paradigm for political life" (Ibid: 39) which has the potential to be "actualized" through political action ("praxis").

According to Arendt, "laws" (i.e. behavioral regularities) which can be ascertained by observation of the "social" realm and subsequently applied to a further understanding of this realm are, or more to the point, should be regarded as meaningless within the realm of the "polis". Another way of stating this is: what can be observed to be true of/in the social world (i.e. laboring/domestic activity) should not, according to Arendt, be regarded as a premise on which to construct political systems nor guide or predict political action. It is political/social theory's essential error that it has failed to recognize this, and as a result, "the modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and resulted in a factual transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society" (Arendt, 1958: 4). For Arendt, then, it is one of the fundamental errors of modern political theory (since Marx) to substitute "making" for "acting" and consequently to confuse "freedom" with "necessity", i.e. to see "freedom" as emerging out of, or merging with, necessity (Arendt, 1958). It is for this reason, and according to the "meaningfulness" of social action (i.e. "praxis"/political action), that Arendt would rewrite history (in the following way).

If, as we have seen, political action (i.e. "praxis") is by definition unpredictable then the task of discerning it can only be accomplished retrospectively. If (by definition) the "history" of political action is a series of "novelties", then it would follow that there can exist neither "laws" nor guidelines which would render political action predictable. If it were the case that an "action" was found to be predictable (and thus subject to empirical theorizing and verification), then it must be, by definition, an activity of the social realm (i.e. behavior) and not "praxis". The history of true or genuine action ("praxis") becomes then a history of "novelties" involving "speech" and "deeds" which lead to progress and change. Such was the case, observes Arendt, for the American Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement.

The French and Russian Revolutions, on the other hand, are not given the status of "historical" events because they belong to the "realm of necessity" i.e. to practice guided by "economic"/social theory, rather than by "political" ideals. Arendt, then, would rewrite an idealized account of human history - a history of the "polis" and a history cloistered from, and immune to, the real history of social/political action.

We have seen that "praxis" is clearly an activity oriented toward "what should be", but "what should be" remains an open-ended possibility until it is realized as a "novelty" through speech and deed. Accordingly, Arendt argues that theorists (political not social) should engage in establishing, through contemplation, what is and what is not possible, and not what ought to be. However, what ought to be - a "truly free way of life" (Arendt, 1958) - can only be realized in the act of "praxis". The theorist must therefore remain silent when confronted with the axiological question of "praxis".

We have also seen that what stands consistently and persistently in the way of the realization of "praxis" is an increasing intrusion of "scientific and technical knowledge into political life" (Ibid: 3) and the practice of constructing political systems on the basis of scientifically derived social "truths". As the "praxis" theorist must remain mute on the question of "praxis", he/she is impotent in the face of this intrusive and efficacious knowledge. What Arendt seems to be suggesting (perhaps metaphorically, and given the inherent idealism of her position, perhaps ironically) is that social/political ideology must be confronted, and destroyed by action, or leastwise by the example of an ethical "praxis".

If "praxis" is neither guided by theory nor responsive to the philosophizing of the "praxis" theoretician then the legitimate question to ask is: how can it be other than chaotic, or, reactive to some exigency of behaviorism? Arendt's epistemology provides the answer.



Arendt's epistemology can best be characterized, in most the general terms, as a form of "speculative idealism" which draws upon classical philosophical positions to argue against "materialism" (understood as "mechanistic"). Consciousness, she argues, is a dynamic process whereby "the objective reality becomes dissolved into a subjective state of mind" (1958: 282). Consciousness does not therefore actively reflect the objective world (vs. "objectification"); rather, it is turned inward. The "cognitive concern" of human consciousness, argues Arendt, is introspection through which "objective reality" is immediately dissolved (Ibid: 280). This observation is supported by Arendt's (characteristically) speculative claim that objective reality, in and for itself, is unknowable and therefore "objective" truths are, so to speak, "unthinkable". All that man/woman can know essentially is "...what he makes himself" (Ibid: 282). Expressed in the Cartesian philosophy upon which she draws, this proposition reads as "the mind can only know that which it has itself produced" (Ibid 282). However, through reason (a faculty which Arendt argues all human beings are endowed with, in varying degrees) balanced by "common sense" (which Arendt argues is the highest order sense), man can arrive at "certainty". And certainty, predicated on reason and common sense, provides the basis for "discovery" and "development" (Ibid: 283).

It would seem then that the threat of social theory (i.e. scientific knowledge) to ethical/political practices (i.e. the "polis") can, according to Arendt, best be met by those endowed with a highly developed faculty of reason and an abundance of common sense. Although it is doing Arendt an injustice to suggest that she is calling upon "philosopher kings" to meet the threat, her epistemology would nevertheless seem to point to this as the only solution (save for the fact that "truth" has been replaced by what is argued to be reasonable, practical and ethical). If, as Arendt suggests, "praxis" must be an activity that is free from, and autonomous of, the domestic and work related

aspects of life, then who, save the "leisured" class can really involve themselves in "praxical activity"? Or perhaps to mitigate this implicit critique of Arendt, one might argue that she is merely suggesting that there is a direct negative (i.e. inverse) relationship between lives lived out in the realm of necessity and "praxis" (political participation). We might, therefore, view Arendt's statement as a prophetic observation, were it not the case that her "praxis" is a "normative" statement (and thus lacks any tie to the empirical world). One should not forget that Arendt's notion of "praxis" portrays what "ought to be". As such the laboring "classes", (i.e. "class" as a historical/political force) are, by definition, excluded as the agents of "praxis".

In summation, Arendt can be seen to be committed to an ontology which reveals the productive dimension of human existence as mundane, cyclical, and therefore meaningless. "Praxis", as the meaningful dimension of human existence, is articulated in contrast to this ontology. Ontology is, for Arendt, a methodological device against which her notion of "praxis" can be developed. Ironically, the stronger the ontology is, the stronger her notion of "praxis" becomes. In being formed against a Marxist ontology, Arendt's "praxis" becomes a formidable notion. This is why Arendt does not deny the validity of a Marxist ontology: she in fact, encourages it. If her concept of "praxis" is understood as an idealized notion of "what ought to be", then it must be premised on a clear understanding of "what is". Marxism provides this. Without a clear picture of "what is", "what ought to be" is meaningless. However, Arendt's "praxis" is also premised on the "failure" of Marxism (and positivism) to go beyond ontology. In other words, it is premised on the inability of Marxism to suggest "what ought to be". In effect, Arendt's "praxis" feeds on the inherent weakness of a scientific Marxism. Arendt's "praxis" is therefore premised on the argument that Marxism is a "science", and that her interpretation of Marxism is correct.

The central epistemological assumption of Arendt's notion of "praxis" is that there is an unbridgeable gap between the domains of scientific and ethical knowledge. This contention is predicated on Arendt's "ontological claim" of the two autonomous domains of activity - labor and politics. Once again the validity of this claim hinges on whether or not Marxism is anything more than a science of mundane activity.

These commitments and assumptions provide the rationale for the central contention of Arendt's philosophy: that "praxis" is a political activity distinct from social activity which is, or should be, guided by "normative" principles (i.e. universal values) rather than scientific knowledge. The question of emancipatory action must therefore always be addressed to the question of axiology - "what ought there to be".

#### A Traditional "Marxist" Philosophical Concept of "Praxis": A "Critical/ Humanist" Notion

This concept of "praxis" has undergone the most thorough analysis and articulation of all the "praxes" discussed in this thesis, and whereas the other concepts must have their meaning wrought out of what remains, for the most part, implicit within their respective methodological/ theoretical/ philosophical positions, this concept is explicitly recognized and addressed directly by its proponents. In addition, this "praxis" has received the attention of a formidable array of prominent Marxist theorists/ philosophers who generally hold "praxis" to be the central concept of Marxist thought. Consequently, there is a widely (and "uncritically") held assumption, among sociologists, that "praxis" is synonymous with critical/humanist "Marxism".<sup>4</sup>

The concept itself evolves out of an interpretation of "Marxism" as a "philosophy of praxis" (see, for example, Gramsci). Within this philosophy it is held to be an "eo ipso polyvalent for it embraces all sides of man's being" (Vranicki, 1965: 42). As such, the task of providing a succinct statement of its meaning is a task tantamount to providing a comprehensive statement of a total philosophy. Variations do exist among "praxis"-2 theorists, not so much in what they see as the goal of "praxis", but in the variant of "praxis" which they choose to emphasize, the way in which it is emphasized, and the reason why it is emphasized over other variants which comprise the total philosophy of "praxis". However, underlying each variation is the common assumption that the problem of "praxis" is first and foremost a methodological problem. This assumption can be seen to reveal itself in the following shared two-fold assertion of the position: that a correct understanding of the meaning of emancipatory social action (i.e. "praxis"), and a correct understanding of the methodology which serves to apply (or "fit") this understanding (i.e. meaning) to the social world, lies within an interpretation of Marxism as a critical and humanist philosophy. Consequently, it is argued that "praxis" is not a concept for, or of, a traditional philosophy (i.e. "praxis"-1) or a scientific Marxism (i.e. "praxis"-3). Therefore, upon closer examination of "praxis" -2, we should see a concept of "praxis" emerging which expresses a meaning and a theoretical use which are distinct from other meanings and theoretical uses of "praxis" addressed in this thesis, and one which gives rise to (and defends) the broad parameters of philosophical Marxism.

In the forefront of the many efforts to establish "praxis" within "philosophical" Marxism is the work of Mihailo Marcovic. His contribution to the understanding of "praxis" is such that he has attempted to provide a clear and comprehensive statement of the "basic principles" of "praxis" in a "coherent

unity" (Marcovic, 1974). The principles, i.e. the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions of "praxis" that Marcovic so clearly defines, attempt to answer (respectively) the following three questions: "(1) what 'there is'; (2) how do we 'know' what there is; and (3) what 'ought' there to be" (Ibid:9). The "coherent unity" of these principles provides the picture of a total and comprehensive philosophy - a meta-ethical theory (Crocker, 1983) - or, as Marcovic prefers, a "dialectical humanism" (1974). By focusing on these principles, "praxis"-2 can be seen to offer the following view.

#### A. Ontology

Marcovic suggests that it is symptomatic of a scientistic attitude (i.e. positivist and uncritical) to claim that the "...picture of human actuality is the picture of human nature itself" (1974: 12). This picture of actuality, he argues, must be framed within an understanding of man in a dynamic social/historical process where:

under certain historical conditions characterized by private ownership of the means of production, commodity production, market competition and professional politics ....man appears to be ... "acquisitive, possessive, egoistic..." (Ibid:10-12).

However, Marcovic contends that this "historically conditioned picture of human actuality" could be otherwise by virtue of what man potentially is (Ibid.). Man (he argues) is both at the same time what is actually manifest relative to the social/historical conditions under which he lives and that which remains thwarted or blocked (i.e. his "latent potential") by those very same conditions. What remains thwarted or blocked is man as a 'being of praxis"- the sum total of his latent dispositions and capacities.

Within this general statement of "praxis"-2's ontology, one finds a number of propositions which are attempting to establish unique premises upon which to predicate a concise and critical philosophical understanding of "praxis" and a theoretical/methodological "space" distinct from the other "praxes". However, it is clear that a number of these premises and observations are shared with the other "praxes". We find, for instance, that "praxis"-2 shares with "praxis"-1 the conviction that "praxis" is neither, nor should be, a subject for or of a Marxian (or any other) "science". Both positions are constructed in opposition to the perceived scientism of "praxis"-3. More precisely, both positions can be seen to converge on the same point of opposition to the methodology of "praxis"-3: specifically, a methodology which places an understanding of "praxis" (as meaningful social action) within the context of observable regularities and from which law-like inferences may be made about what is possible. Further, their respective methodologies converge on a "moral" point of opposition to "praxis"-3: specifically, that the methodology of "praxis"-3, when taken to its logical conclusion, leads to "morally" intolerable and therefore unjustifiable social action programs for change.<sup>5</sup> This moral intolerance is provoked by a misunderstanding (or leastwise an arguable interpretation) of Marxist science as being inherently teleological, which justifies totalitarian regimes as impositions of transitory "truths". As Arendt states it:

Totalitarian lawfulness, defying legality and pretending to establish the direct reign of justice on earth, executes the law of History or of Nature without translating it into standards of right and wrong....If properly executed is expected to produce mankind as its end product; and this expectation lies behind the claim to global rule of all totalitarian governments. (1951:462)

These shared points of opposition to "praxis"-3 are a result of "praxis"-1 and 2 being both normative/ethical philosophies. Although their respective theoretical structures pit them as philosophical adversaries, they share the same general goal of substantiating "praxis" as a philosophical concept (albeit, within different "world views"). As such, they both oppose a scientific concept of "praxis". It is not surprising to find that they both, in strikingly similar terms, present "potentiality" as the fundamental predisposition of "being" (essence) and "free" and "universal" activity (Arendt uses the terms "free" and "worldly") as the manifestation of this "being" (existence): that is, man as a "being of praxis".

Although both positions oppose a scientific understanding of "praxis", "praxis"-2 is structured within a Marxian world view, and as such should be regarded as the philosophical nemesis of "praxis"-1. Praxis"-2 begins its attempt to establish this by way of expressing "praxis's" affinity with Marx's idea of history. According to Marcovic, man's realization as a "being of praxis" is blocked by specific historical conditions. From this, one is led to infer that man, as a being of "praxis", can (and should) emerge, given the appropriate historical conditions. History can therefore be seen as either an inhibiting or empowering vehicle vis-a-vis man as a being of praxis". In other words, man either is, or is not, a "being of praxis" because of the social/historical process of labor. Either way, he remains "pictured" as an historical being (although not necessarily a "being of "praxis"), tied to history by his participation in the process of social production. For Arendt, man can/must be a "being of praxis" in spite of the labouring activity. Labor remains a necessary (albeit unfortunate) condition of life - a cyclical and mundane exigency of species survival - which must therefore be confronted as an intransigent and debilitating obstacle in the way of human "praxis". As we have seen, Arendt presents "praxis" within an abstract realm known as the

"polis", a realm distinct from that of laboring activity and a realm which therefore excludes the social production of labor as a meaningful indicant of history (past, in the making, or to come).

Marcovic presents us with both a descriptive and a normative view of human nature which draws upon the classical philosophical distinction between human "existence" and human "essence". By infusing this philosophical distinction with the premise that man's "essence" (i.e. his latent potential) is accessible "empirically", he is attempting to divert his position away from the speculative and abstract philosophy which is usually taken as the foregone conclusion of invoking the essence-existence problem (as in "praxis"-1). The normative content of Marcovic's ontology suggests that given favorable conditions of "relative abundance, freedom, and social solidarity" (Marcovic, 1974: 12) latent dispositions should become actual ones. But given that these latent dispositions are already presumed to be actual (and therefore hint at being empirically verifiable) then we cannot conclude (for the time being) that the position is categorically normative (and idealist). This conclusion must remain tentative, predicated as it is on the verification (or refutation) of Marcovic's central hypothesis which is: if the appropriate conditions are present, then man's latent potential will express itself. If so, it can be concluded that man's latent potential is actual (as correctly hypothesized).

Without actively pursuing this hypothesis it remains a speculative and wholly circular proposition within which human essence (latent potential) and its manifestation (in human "praxis") are hypostatized. Clearly, it is meant to be pursued. However, the active engagement of this normative-laden hypothesis requires (as implied) the seeking out of the appropriate conditions for human "praxis". It requires, in other words, a methodology which is distinct from that of a Marxist science, but which remains capable of expressing both the "conditions" and possibility of "praxis" as real and concrete.



## B. Epistemology: A Question of Praxis and Method

As we have seen, Marcovic's ontology can be seen to present us with the idea of the potentiality of human action ("praxis") as an empirical category, without polemicising out (as Arendt does) the idea that "labor" is also a meaningful category of both human existence and essence. This is not to say that "praxis" is taken (by Marcovic) as being synonymous with "labor" (as in "praxis"-3) and thus is only meaningful within the context of "labor" as a category of existence (sans essence). Rather, Marcovic attempts to avoid this conclusion by replacing the idea of "praxis" as an economic category [within a determinate structure "guided" by laws (i.e. the idea of teleology in social theory)] with the idea of "praxis" as the expression of the efficacy of the "historical subject in the changing of reality" (Sher, 1977: 63). Because of this, the question of ascertaining the correct conditions which ought to empower man as a "being of praxis" must be re-directed to a world view wherein the "historical subject" is seen as the volitive agent capable of seizing the moment and shaping history. This, however, provokes the following question: if the methodology of science (as in "praxis"-3) is not appropriate to an understanding of social "praxis" (i.e. praxis is not equated with determinate structural laws or regularities), how is one to approach an understanding of the conditions which are held to be appropriate for human "praxis" without being led back into the speculative realm of idealism and/or relativism? In other words, how does one delimit an otherwise infinite number of "speculative" antecedents to "praxis"? "Praxis"-2 is compelled to do so, given that its point is to

free people from causal mechanisms that had heretofore determined their existence in some important way (Fay, 1977: 210).

Therefore, a methodology is needed to reveal

both the existence and precise nature of these mechanisms..thereby depriving them of their power (Ibid., emphasis mine).

As we now see, this is not an ontological problem (as "praxis"-3 would have it) but a two-fold epistemological question of: "how do we know what there is?" and "with what confidence we can state this is so?". It is a question which elicits the answer that "praxis"-2 is a "critical theory".

In the context of "praxis"-2, epistemology can be understood as working to establish a "critical" methodology within which social action is, accordingly, understood "dialectically". It is a matter of providing a methodology which, as Marcovic states, "introduces into the understanding of the existing state of affairs an understanding of its negation and an understanding of "the constructive building up process" (Marcovic, 1974:28). In other words, a critical methodology must not only provoke a dialectical understanding of "causal" mechanisms but must also form the basis for ".... revolutionary negation and supercession of existing reality" (Ibid: 22), i.e. praxis. In keeping with the foregoing ontological premises of "praxis"-2, it must do so while maintaining the "historical actor" as the volitive force in history. How Marcovic attempts this is as follows.

Marcovic subscribes to the most basic of Marx's materialist premises: "man is not what he thinks but what he does" (Ibid: 17ff. 16). Accordingly, "praxis" should be equated with acting, not thinking. If "praxis" is specified as being synonymous with productive labor, as we have already seen, then it is an easy step to place an understanding of "praxis" within a universal ontological theory which expresses laws structuring what man does, and "dialectic" as the law-like motor determining the direction of man's actions (i.e. human

history). On the other side of the positivist methodological coin, the dialectic becomes an expression of the law-like structure of knowledge. Both these positions are well known, as is the consequence of rooting "dialectic" in an idealist view of the social world (i.e. the priority of thought to action: Hegel). Marcovic dismisses all three of these understandings because they "ignore .....all activism in Marx's thought" (Ibid.) and because the "historical subject" is the determinant force in history - a proposition that none of the above methodologies are capable of expressing. There must therefore be another understanding of dialectic, one which is capable of placing an understanding of "praxis" within the context of "action" without giving over an understanding of dialectic to either idealism or ontological/epistemological "structuralism". This understanding is otherwise known as "dialectical humanism". The methodology Marcovic strives for, is one which attempts to make the causal structures as real as possible (for the potential agent of "praxis") so as to facilitate (for the social actor) an understanding of the obstacle in the way of "praxis". In effect, the social actor must see him/herself as un-free (i.e. "caused") as a precondition to knowing that he/she has the power to negate and supersede this existing "causal"/structural reality.

In his attempt to establish this methodology, Marcovic first takes us through the methodological terrain of the "social sciences", plucking from it tenets to support his methodological effort. As he does so he attempts to reject what he argues as being the "one-sidedness" of both positivism and subjectivism while abstracting essential features from each. Positivism, because it has observable or overt behavior within its methodological purview, "provides abstract analytical information about the facts and external, objective, structural characteristics of certain isolated social phenomena" (Ibid: 20-21). However, it treats social phenomena as "objects" [and thus "degrades ourselves" (Ibid: 18)] by ignoring the other dimension (or side) of

human existence. In other words, it is "one-sided" because it is incapable of grasping the subjective dimension of social action. Subjectivism, on the other hand, can overcome this weakness through its methodological ability to provide "a concrete, qualitative, historical understanding of the subjective dimensions of a social whole" (Ibid: 22). But, like positivism, it fails to grasp social action as a process. Consequently, via positivism we have access to the structural components of history and via subjectivism we have access to the subjective and historical indices of human agency. However to understand the historical actor as an efficacious and volitive force, requires that we have the ability to see the actor in the dynamic process of making history. This requires that we see social action ("praxis") dialectically. Another way to state this central proposition of "praxis"-2 is that positivism and subjectivism are correct insofar as they express two actual dimensions of existence, but they can not grasp the fact that these two dimensions (and therefore the methodologies that express them) are dialectically, and therefore inextricably, related.

It is the dialectic which adds the dynamic dimension of process to the otherwise "one-sidedness" and static methodologies of both positivism and subjectivism. Without it, the attempted merger of two polar methodologies would exhibit shades of a familiar "interpretive sociological" (i.e. Weberian) methodology. It would hardly be unique. But Marcovic moves quickly to dispel this suggestion by predicating his emergent methodology on important tenets which point to his methodology as emancipatory and therefore unique (i.e. as "dialectical humanism"). First, the methodology is clearly an attempt to synthesise (not to find a middle ground for) the "essential features of behaviorism and phenomenology, of structuralism and historicism"; and to designate such a method as "dialectical" (Ibid: 21-22). Second, and more importantly, the intent of the methodology is ultimately to change social reality: under-

standing and explaining it is only an antecedence to this goal (i.e. it is "critical"). Marcovic distances his method from a more familiar sociological one by virtue of making it dialectical. It is distanced from other Marxist/sociological positions by virtue of what dialectic means (i.e. "dialectical humanism").

"Dialectic", for Marcovic, is a general philosophical method and like the concept of "praxis" its meaning is elusive insofar as it defies any attempt to succinctly state what it means. We do know that it is not an ontological principle and therefore is not to be understood as a "law" within objective teleological processes (be they structural/historical). We also know that it is not solely an epistemological principle and therefore should not be understood as expressing a general structure of knowing (as for example, Althusser's). Rather it is supposed to be understood as a method which assumes that "social phenomena are not simply given but are produced by men as the result of a conscious choice from among men" (Ibid 23). It assumes, in other words, that there is a dialectical relationship between what is given and what is created in the consciousness of the social actor.

In the context of Marcovic's methodology - the dialectical synthesis of positivism and subjectivism - the dialectic is meant to express the following. In order to change the world (in the direction of "praxis") a precise understanding of that world (at the moment of potential change) is needed: hence positivism. In order that the potential agent of "praxis" "know" the possibility of changing the world, an understanding of why the social actor does not perceive the structural constraints (i.e. objective) on his/her potential as an agent of "praxis", nor "know" (for him/herself) that he/she has the potential to "deprive" them of their power, is needed: hence subjectivism. If the potential agent of "praxis" "knows" him/herself as the agent of "praxis" then he/she "knows" the structural constraints and "knows" the possibility of confronting

them and depriving them of their power. Hence, the social actor is seen in a dialectical relationship with the objective world. He/she knows him/herself as the maker of history, as the agent of "praxis". However, these abstractions do not bring us any closer to understanding what dialectic means, precisely.

It is clear that Marcovic is staking out his position within the broad and complex Marxian problematic of the "relationship of consciousness to being" (Hoffman, 1975:81). It is also clear that the "dialectic" is a central tenet of this position because it is held to be that which intervenes as the crucial determinate in the interplay between "objective" reality and the content of "consciousness". However, in the final analysis, to understand what Marcovic means by "dialectic" would require that we engage the idealist philosophy from which its meaning springs and in so doing find therein a meaning of dialectic further mystified by the elusive and abstract "Hegelian phraseology" of which it is a part (Ibid:97).

An understanding of "praxis"-2's "dialectic" can be approached from the point of view of its theoretical use vis-a-vis competing notions of "praxis". It is a concept which has evolved out of the opposition to materialist epistemologies, and serves the purpose of theoretically (and logically) refuting the materialist proposition that human consciousness is inextricably connected (reflective of, or corresponding to) to the material world. If "something" is seen to intervene between these two dimensions of existence, then the intimate connection between the objective structural "world" and the content of consciousness is broken (and "objectification" is confuted as the unifying process). Consequently, the former can be denied as determinate of the latter, and the latter can be accorded primacy over the former on the question of axiology.

The "dialectic" is to Marcovic's methodology what the mechanism of "human cognition" is to Arendt's. Although it is the specific character of their

respective intervening "mechanisms" which color the resulting epistemologies, both are aimed at the same end - to refute materialism and therefore weaken the underlying epistemological structure of a scientific conception of "praxis".

Marcovic's "dialectic" does come into a somewhat clearer focus as we move from the abstract principles which underly "praxis"-2 to those which guide its application in "practice". This is still a question of method - a question of how theory is united with practice - or, more specifically, a question of how "critical theory" combines with "revolutionary practice" to yield emancipatory social action ("praxis"). With this, we are led to engage the axiological principles of "praxis"-2.

#### C. The Question of Axiology: "What Ought There To Be?"

The dialectic is, as discussed, a method which relies on a traditional positivist methodology to discover "what is". But to understand why social action directed toward "what ought to be" does not occur in the face of a repressive social order, goes beyond the explanatory capabilities of positivism. Marcovic skirts the periphery of a social psychology explanation to conclude that inaction is a result of individuals acting out of habit. However, he attributes the source of such habits to "myths" ( for example: "nationalism", "capitalism", "socialism" ) which are predominate in any society at a given time (Marcovic, 1974). In other words, while Marcovic may be seen to glimpse the methodological parameters of social psychological explanation, he clearly broadens this explanation by the suggestion that "myths" ("ideology") provoke a shared "habitual" response across society. But it is possible, he argues, to see through these myths - to uncover their source in the deeper structure of society - by seeing them for what they are.

It is "theory" which "helps to bring to consciousness what one is in the habit of doing unconsciously" (Ibid:23). Once known (i.e. the source of our actions and the structural context in which they take place), the central "revolutionary" question arises of

whether social phenomena should be allowed continue in the same line of development or whether they should be radically changed by the abolition of some essential components of their structure (Ibid: 23-24).

It is, then, "dialectical" theorising that becomes a "critical" tool in assessing the present social structure of what is possible and whether the source of our actions can, and should, be changed in the direction of a consciously chosen one. If so, and if realized through action, we have a union of theory and practice, i.e. "praxis". If not, then we remain, according to Marcovic, "alienated". Either way, the choice is left in the hands of the social actor. Consequently, "praxis"-2 can be seen to emphasise social action as voluntaristic (and the related cognate of human agency) rather than as being an imperative of history (as arguably in "praxis"-3).

While the choice to act or not is firmly in the hands of the social actor, the fact that "dialectical theorising" is a complex and formalised methodology would seem to suggest that the right time to act, and the direction the action should take, are questions more suited to the "praxis" theoretician. If Gramsci is taken as a proponent of "praxis"-2, then this is indeed true and we come to see that "praxis"-2 places the intellectual as the vanguard of emancipatory action (i.e. "praxis"). Gramsci (like Marcovic) emphasises the efficacy of the "historical subject in the changing of reality" (Sher, 1977:63) and likewise, the "self-organization" of social groups to this end. A potent contribution to



the "philosophy of praxis" is Gramsci's insistence that "intellectuals" (philosophers) make "critical" (for the interested masses) an "already existing activity" (Ibid:106), thereby guaranteeing a place for intellectuals in the process of transforming "existing conditions".

A central tenet of "praxis"-2 is the "self-determination" of the agent of "praxis" yet, ironically, the agent of "praxis" is dependent on the "praxis" theoretician. Exploring this irony further reveals that it expresses a fundamental problem of "praxis"-2. This problem is as follows: given that the "praxis" theoretician can (according to the methodological tenets of "praxis"-2), through dialectical theorising, arrive at the "general structure" of a particular "historical epoch" [i.e "...an internal limit, an essential negative component of a system in the sense that it constitutes the main impediment to the realization of the optimal possibility of the system (Marcovic, 1974: 35)] and, given that teleology has been replaced by "self-determination" (conscious choice) as the "mechanism" of change, then change (i.e "praxis") has a number of possible directions. In other words, irrespective of whether or not one accepts "praxis"-2's methodological tenets, they do contain provisions (in theory) for accessing the "objective" constraints on "praxis" (via positivism) and the subjective constraints on "praxis" (via subjectivism). What is clearly lacking, however, are any methodological tenets which would suggest the direction the agent "should" choose, once "free" of his/her constraints (i.e. once he/she knows him/herself as the agent of "praxis"). Presumably, this "choice" is in the hands of the "praxis" theoretician. If so (and the following would indicate this is the case) then the "praxis" theoretician is confronted with the problem of how to choose, and to what authority to appeal in choosing the right direction.

Marcovic responds to this inquiry by first of all making it clear that there can be no right direction only an optimal one. In doing so, "praxis"-2 breaches the parameters of a Marxian understanding of social action, and the "traditional" normative underpinnings of "praxis"-2 are revealed. The direction "praxis" should take is essentially a choice based on prevailing values embodied in our past and present moral, aesthetic, and political systems. He states:

If we know accepted norms in a community, then from the acceptance of some value statements we can conclude something about the properties of objects to which the value judgements refer. Or, if we already know the properties of the evaluated objects we can infer from that knowledge and the given value judgements what the prevailing norm and value-principles are in the given society. (Ibid: 43)

In other words, "praxis" is "norm" guided social action. Supporting and adding further clarity to this conclusion are a number of underlying propositions. First, values are not "purely subjective" nor are they "emotive". They exist, so to speak, as "objects" with, as Marcovic states, "properties" (for example, a "social institution") (Ibid: 39). If such an object has the properties to satisfy a human need then they can be said to be values with respect to the particular individual whose need it satisfies (Ibid.). However, these values must have a tendency toward "universality" and away from self-centered particular interests. Action which maximises these values and which strives for the "optimisation" of these ideals is synonymous with "praxis" (understood as an action), and participation by human beings in such action ("praxis") is synonymous with what is meant by man as a "being of praxis".

### A Traditional Marxist "Scientific" Concept of "Praxis"

The theoretical structure of scientific Marxism yields a concept of "praxis" that is the nemesis of "praxis"-1 and "praxis"-2's. It is a concept which is synonymous with Marx's concept of labor. It is essentially an economic category embedded in an interrelated web of descriptive concepts which in unity express labor as a "generic activity" which is therefore applicable regardless of the historical form it may assume (Crocker, 1983). It is a concept which expresses "the essential productive dimension of human life" (Bernstein, 1971: 63). Marx's Capital forms the theoretical/methodological centerpiece of this position: "Capital is the drama of 'praxis' as labor or production in modern society" (Ibid:61). "Labor" (and subsequently "praxis") is taken to be the central concept of Marx's thought because its content of meaningful ideas expresses three propositions<sup>6</sup> essential to a full and correct understanding of meaningful social action (i.e. "praxis"). These propositions, which form the core of this discussion, are: what distinguishes humans from animals; what conditions other features of life; and, the historical forms of labor as either alienated or unalienated (Crocker, 1983). Although this "praxis" gives rise to a comprehensive body of ideas, it is not (this time) to be understood as a philosophical concept within a comprehensive philosophy [either traditional philosophy (as in "praxis"-1) or Marxist philosophy (as in "praxis"-2)] but rather as a scientific concept within a comprehensive science of society.

From this brief summary alone, one can see that this notion of "praxis" expresses a meaning that is the antithesis of what I have earlier described as being a traditional philosophical meaning of "praxis" (i.e. Arendt's). Even so, it would be misleading to elaborate upon the meaning of a scientific conception of "praxis" by pointing to how its distinctive meaningful content differs from

that of Arendt's concept of "praxis", or that of "praxis"-2's, because the specific meaningful content of this "praxis" arises out of, and therefore must be understood within, a distinct methodological approach to an understanding of the social world - an approach guided by the well known dictum (s) of Marx's Thesis on Feuerbach VIII & XI. For example, just as the concept of "freedom" means very different things when presented within a Durkheimian rather than a Marxian understanding of the social world, so it is with "praxis" when understood within the particular methodological context of each "praxis" position. Consequently, it is not by way of addressing the divergent meanings of "praxis" that I pose the question of how this "praxis" should be understood, but by way of focusing on how its meaning is seen to evolve out of a distinct conception of "praxis" as a category which subsequently leads to a distinct methodological approach [a "world view" or "favored metaphor" (Morgan, 1983)] and therefore to a conception of "praxis" that is incommensurable with the other concepts addressed in the thesis. It is in accord, then, with the less obvious divergent methodological approaches that a scientific conception of "praxis" should be argued as being a concept that is distinct from "praxis"-1's and "praxis"-2's concepts. It is in this way that a scientific concept of "praxis" can be established as being unique.

Both "praxis"-1 and "praxis"-3 argue that "praxis" is a category: there is, however, (as I have implied) more than one meaning of category. Arendt's notion of "praxis" is constructed within a traditional philosophical understanding of category as a formal classification of a term that is "basic and not susceptible to further analysis" (Stein, 1975: 212, emphasis mine). As such, "praxis" is expressed as an 'a priori' category which necessarily leads to an understanding of "praxis" as a "mode of being" (that remains unchanged, or eternal, so long

as reason remains intrinsic to man). Similarly, Marx argues that "praxis" is a category which likewise expresses a "mode of being". However, because the meaningful content of this "praxis" (as a "mode of being") is based on "real premises" - that is, on the observation of "real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live" (Marx and Engels, 1845-1846: 19) - then the very meaning of what Arendt takes to be a category is challenged. Contrary to a philosophical understanding, a category now becomes understood as an expression of something which is empirically evident (i.e. "real" and "actual") and which therefore may be placed, as a subject, at the very center of scientific analysis. Consequently, "praxis" should now be seen to take on a new meaning because a category should now be understood as a mode of "existence" (i.e. an 'a posteriori' category). Accordingly, the meaningful content of "praxis" should be seen to express the "material" basis of social relations, and therefore to express "social action" as an "actual", "transitory" and "historical" process (Marx, 1846: 518-522), thereby excluding any normative tenets - any "visionary" or prophetic claims.

As such, a scientific conception of "praxis" should be understood as an articulator of social action in accord with the fundamental premises of Marx's historical materialist thesis against those which lead to speculative and "mystifying" notions of social action - in short, against idealist notions found in traditional philosophy, such as Arendt's, and those found in philosophical Marxism(s) (as presented in "praxis"-2). Even so, on the basis of this understanding of category alone (and an understanding of "praxis" within it), "praxis" does not achieve the status of a scientific concept. It does, however, serve to place an understanding of itself within Marx's more sweeping historical materialist thesis by implicitly re-asserting the following epistemological premise of this thesis: "... 'ideas' (and) 'categories' ...are no more eternal than the relations they express... They are historical and transitory products."

(Ibid: 524) that do "....not explain practice from the idea but explains the formation of ideas from material practice..." (Ibid., 1845-1846: 42). But this epistemological assertion alone neither serves to distance "praxis"-3's conception of "praxis" from other Marxist conceptions, nor serve to extricate an understanding of "praxis" from the grasps of traditional philosophical understandings of "praxis": it merely replaces one philosophical contrivance of social action with another.

An understanding of "praxis" couched within a materialist epistemology may set the stage for an understanding of social action (i.e. "praxis") in the real world but it remains, as such, a philosophical interpretation of the world, or, "a mystery which mislead(s) theory to mysticism". These mysteries, Marx goes on to say, "find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice (1845: 15). In line with Marx (i.e. the interpretation of Marxism as a science), and therefore set against philosophical Marxism(s), a scientific concept of "praxis" begins to express itself as such by arguing that meaningful social action ("praxis") must be, as the Thesis suggests, "comprehended" within a scientific methodology in order that it may be understood as real activity within the real world, and therefore, as praxis.

In accordance with the methodological requisite of a scientific Marxism, a scientific conception of "praxis" must be presented in two ways: as a descriptive concept in order for it to be understood as a scientific concept, and as an economic category in order for it to be understood as an integral part of a scientific Marxism. It is crucial, then, that "praxis's" meaningful content is seen to fulfill this requisite of a scientific Marxism.

In moving on to consider these two requirements of a scientific "praxis", we can leave behind Arendt's concept of "praxis" with the following conclusion: by virtue of two antithetical notions of category (and the divergent "world views" that each, in turn, is seen to give rise to), Arendt's "praxis",

or any traditional philosophical concept of "praxis", is incommensurable with any Marxian concept of "praxis". We can move on, then, to consider the meaningful content of a scientific concept of "praxis" within Marxism. In doing so, our prime consideration is directed toward the questions of whether or not a scientific Marxism is capable of expressing a concept of "praxis, and if so, what tenets of this Marxism should be emphasized to express the meaningful content of "praxis".

One of the tenets that a scientific concept of "praxis" should hold to (as part of the meaningful content of "praxis") is that it "spells out that which distinguishes humans from animals". In light of "praxis" being a descriptive concept, what is "spelled out" should be empirically accessible and verifiable. Further, this content should be in accord with the premises of a Marxist science, i.e. the meaningful content of "praxis" should give rise to, support, and not contradict the premises of a Marxist science, and in turn, these premises should be based on (as earlier discussed) what is real and actual (i.e. on "fact").

The claim itself is a re-phrasing of Marx's observation that:

the first historical act of (these) individuals distinguishing them from animals is not that they think, but that they begin to 'produce their means of subsistence' (1845-1846: 20ff.).

Clearly, it is "productive labor" that "praxis" expresses as "that which distinguishes humans from animals". While this is an unproblematic observation among Marxisms - it is a universal tenet of Marxist thought - it strikes at the heart of Aristotle's and Arendt's concepts of "praxis". In other words, while it expresses an empirically wrought criterion for distinguishing "what is human" from "animal" and is therefore antithetical to the criterion expressed by a traditional philosophical conception of "praxis", most Marxisms, regardless of

their particular leaning, can, and do accommodate this basic tenet. Because both scientific and philosophical Marxisms (and "praxis"-3 and "praxis"-2, respectively) hold to this tenet, it is not one to which the question of the uniqueness of a scientific concept of "praxis" can be addressed. But this shared tenet of Marxism(s) also gives rise to (as is its purpose) a number of premises which are implicit in it (and which are elsewhere elaborated by Marx). As the criterion for distinguishing animals from humans, or, human activity from animal activity, it gives rise to (implies) a fundamental premise upon which Marx's ontology/anthropology rests. It places the laboring activity - an empirically amenable process - firmly at the center of questions concerning the meaningfulness/non-meaningfulness of human existence and social action (whether approached sociologically or anthropologically). Consequently, both "what man is" and "what he can/will be" are questions that are potentially amenable to scientific investigation. "Praxis" understood as "productive labor" also gives rise to (implies) the first premise of history which remains, thereafter, the central working concept of historical analysis. As Marx observes, productive labor is a "definite form of activity" which, according to "what" and "how" individuals produce, expresses "a definite "mode of life" (Ibid: 20), and,

The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men (Ibid.).

Thus "praxis", as "productive labor", can also be seen to give rise to (imply) a fundamental (and "naturalistic") premise of a materialist conception of history.

"Praxis", as we have seen, is synonymous with productive labor. Because of this, "praxis" is able to capture (as part of its meaningful content) the premise(s) of Marx's ontology, anthropology, and materialist conception of



history. While it is synonymous with productive labor, it is at the same time a more expressive and comprehensive concept than is productive labor. This should not, however, mislead one to accept these premises as abstract expressions (i.e. as 'a prioristic') within a philosophical view of the social world (as in "praxis"-2). "Praxis", it should be re-emphasized, is a descriptive concept "spelling out" both productive labor (as its meaningful content) and the empirical amenability of "productive labor" (as a methodological tenet of "scientific Marxism"). Because of this, and in accordance with Marx, "these premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way" (Ibid.). "Praxis" understood as "productive labor" reaffirms the fact that meaningful social action ("praxis") is not a "mystical" entity but an empirically amenable social process as are the premises that arise out of this understanding. But all of these premises are crucial to an understanding of Marxism regardless of the particular Marxism that is upheld as the "right" one. (As we have seen, "praxis"-2 gives rise to the same premises as those of "praxis"-3.). This first claim, therefore, does not express anything that would make a scientific notion of "praxis" either incommensurable with, or unique among, other Marxian notions of "praxis".

It is the distinct methodology of each "praxis" position which truly underlies the distinctiveness of both of the "Marxist" concepts of "praxis" examined in this thesis. Each claims to be couched within a Marxian world view and each accepts the premises of Marxism (as earlier described), but by virtue of their respective methodologies, they disagree, sharply, as to what these premises express. This disagreement is focused on the question of whether these premises express a "normative" philosophy of "praxis" which emphasises the volitive nature of human consciousness and the efficacy of norm-guided social action, or whether they express a scientific "praxis" which emphasises the more objective exigencies of structural/ historical determinates - the

laws/regularities inherent to a teleological historical/social process. On this question of method, two notions serve as the central focus for the methodologists of "praxis"-3: the notion of "dialectic" as a method for both understanding and predicting the history of human "praxis", and the notion of "objectification" as the basis of making the claim as to the "truth" of "what is" and "what ought to be".

The second major claim of a scientific notion of praxis is that it "spells out that which conditions other features of life". This is the single most important claim of "praxis"-3 because it frees "praxis" from the abstract realm of philosophy by explicitly establishing "praxis" within a distinct and widely contended approach to the understanding of "meaningful" social action - the methodology of scientific Marxism. In doing so, it provides a clear statement of this "praxis's" theoretical use. The underlying premise of "praxis"-3, which is aimed at establishing the above conclusion is that "praxis" is first and foremost an economic category. What "praxis"-3 means by the second claim is therefore underscored by what it takes to be the meaning of an economic category.

There are, arguably, two distinct "uses" of economic category to be found in Marxist thought. One developed in Marx's early philosophical works while the other developed in the more scientific dialogues of Das Kapital, as well as in the works which anticipate it, and the works of Engels (and Lenin) which follow it. One use (i.e. the "early" use constructed for epistemological purposes) suggests that "'economic categories' are only 'abstract expressions' of these actual relations and only remain true while these relations exist" (Marx, 1846:522). "Praxis" understood within the context of this particular use of economic category is an "abstract expression" of the "real, transitory, historic social relations"(Ibid.). In effect, what is being said here is that categories, in general, are "reflections" of material reality. This is quite

simply an epistemological proposition, or, more accurately, one which implies a crude materialist epistemology. But there is more that can be inferred from this proposition. The observation that economic categories, in particular, are reflections of the "real" economic base of society (i.e. the infrastructure) provokes the suggestion that reflections can be otherwise, i.e., that categories [or "ideas" (Ibid: 524)] can be other than reflections of what is "real" (i.e. "ideology"). We have then the epistemological basis for a theory of knowledge, one which, premised (speculatively) on the "real" or "non-realness" of "social action", can make claims about the "truth" or "untruthfulness" of knowledge, respectively. This "epistemology" can be taken further (as it has been) to find its way into a methodology which purports to provide the "truthful" theory for "theory" guided social action. But all this is highly speculative. Moreover, for Marx (and proponents of a scientific conception of "praxis") the "truth" of human practice (i.e. "praxis") is, as the Thesis, makes clear, a "practical" question. It states:

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a 'practical' question. In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely 'scholastic' question. (Marx, 1845: 13).

It is the case that when armed with an epistemologically premised understanding of economic category (and "praxis" understood accordingly), one is led into the arena of philosophical speculation to arrive at an understanding of "what conditions other features of life". More importantly, one can be enticed into a methodology which presumes to "know" the "truth" of human "praxis", the direction it should take, and the correct "programme" to take it there, wherein the methodologist becomes an "agent" of "praxis".<sup>7</sup> Apart from

this, this understanding of economic category does re-emphasise the premise that history must be grounded in a materialist epistemology [ all "economic categories ...bear the stamp of history" (Marx, 1867: 338)] and re-asserts the centrality of "praxis" to an understanding of "the real history of the relations of production" (Marx, 1857-1858: 252). This understanding, while possibly serving to initiate the distancing of "praxis" from idealist conceptions and to subsequently orientate one to a scientific understanding of "praxis", suggests nothing that would otherwise serve to demarcate a scientific understanding of "praxis" from a Marxist philosophical understanding. More importantly, it is of little theoretical use to the stated central aim of scientific Marxism (and the implied aim of "praxis"-3).

The main point to be gathered from the above discussion is that a scientific concept of "praxis" must be underscored with a concise statement of what it takes as the meaning of an economic category, otherwise, one can be led to a philosophical understanding of "praxis", and consequently to a position which implicitly endorses "praxis" as a philosophical concept. To avoid this conclusion, and the unacceptable consequences of it, it should be explicitly stated (by proponents of "praxis"-3) that in line with the stated aim of scientific Marxism - "to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society" (Marx, 1867: 297) - "praxis" is synonymous with the understanding of economic category as a "rational" abstraction of universal laws/regularities. If "praxis" is to contribute to the aim of scientific Marxism (or at the least not contradict it by aligning itself with a "mystifying" notion of economic category), and if it is to be anything more than a concept that expresses a "mystifying" philosophical category as part of an "abstract" historical process, and if it is to take its rightful place as an economic concept within the methodology of political economy, then, like other concepts expressed within this methodology, it must (as Marx states) "obtain in more or less all

forms of society" (Marx, 1857- 1858: 244). Praxis must, in other words, be understood and utilised as a working "scientific" concept within a methodology which leads to the deduction of the "laws of motion of modern society" (Marx, 1867: 297) and uncovers the "primary equation...lying behind this system" (Marx, 1857-1858: 252). With this "correct grasp of the present" comes "signs of its becomming - foreshadowings of the future" (Ibid.). In short, praxis must be understood as an economic category in the scientific sense - as a category which reflects a deeper reality of "the historical truths which lie beneath contemporary appearances" (Hoffman, 1975: 90). After all, "science... would be superfluous if the outword appearance and the essence of things directly coincided" (Marx: 1864, in Hoffman, 1975: 93).

The "deeper reality" of the social historical process (structure) is, according to Marx, connected "dialectically" (Marx, 1873: 96-98). "Dialectic" is, in this case, an ontological principle, or, "a set of laws or principles governing some sector of the whole of reality" (Bhaskar, 1983: 122). But, when dialectic is expressed theoretically (for the purpose of analysis), it takes on the meaning of "dialectical method" (Marx, 1873: 96-98), or, "epistemological dialectics" (Bhaskar, 1983: 122). Marx also uses "dialectic in reference to the "relational movement of history" (Ibid.). The three meanings of "dialectic" are inextricably connected. However, it is the epistemological use of dialectic which emphasizes the scientific paradigm within Marx's work. This claim is supported by the fact that Marx emphasizes an epistemological use of dialectic when he uses it synonymously for 'scientific' method (Ibid: 125). Therefore, when posing the critical question of "what conditions other features of life" (i.e. from the point of view of "praxis"-3), "dialectic" must encompass all three meanings, but must emphasize an epistemological dialectic, that is:

economic categories as the theoretical expression of historical relations of production, corresponding to a particular stage of development of material production (Marx, 1865: 26).

This dialectic method, when pursued as synonymous with an epistemological dialectic, expresses in theory the dialectical logic inherent in the social historical process (i.e. "material" processes).<sup>8</sup> In the words of Lenin, dialectical logic is the "law governed character of the objective world" (Lenin: 1909: 78). This should not be understood as the suggestion that there is a distinct realm of theory and a distinct realm of practice. Dialectics in the world and dialectics in thought (as the logic of the dialectical method), like "praxis" in the world (as productive labor) and "praxis" in thought (as an economic category), should be understood in the following way:

Objective thought....reason in the world  
also in nature - or as we speak of genera  
in nature, they are the universal. A dog  
is an animal, this is its genus, its  
substantial; the dog itself is this. This  
law, this understanding, this reason itself  
is immanent in nature, it is the essence of  
nature; the latter is not formed from without  
as men make a chair (Hegel, in Lenin, 1914-1916: 266)

"Praxis", when presented within the context of Marx's dialectical historical materialist theorizing, must be understood as real activity in the real world, but it must be divested of its specific historical content when presented within the context of an applied dialectic method (i.e. as a scientific concept). It is in this way that the universal applicability of "praxis's" methodology (i.e. a scientific methodology) can be established. The dialectic method is, as Engels states it, a "historical method divested of its historical form." (Engels, 1859: 514). In other words, while man's genus is, and must remain, history (Habermas, 1971: 29), a scientific understanding

of "praxis" must be premised on a methodology which takes "dialectic" to be a "law of cognition" (Carchedi, 1983).

Drawing upon this understanding of "praxis" as an economic category, one can again raise the critical question: from the point of view of a scientific conception of "praxis", "what" conditions other features of life? A full re-phrasing of "praxis"-3's claim, as found in Marx's Preface to the Critique of Political Economy, reads as follows:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life processes in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. (Marx, 1859: 503).

Clearly, it is "productive labor" (i.e. "praxis") which is the irreducible factor in the conditioning of other features of life. As it is an integral component of the economic structure (or infrastructure), "praxis" is first and foremost an "economic" category. It is clearly expressed (in the above quote) as a vital "theoretical" link between the "superstructure and the "infrastructure" - the "conditioning" force. While its "meaningful content" evolves out of an understanding of "praxis" as being synonymous with "productive labor" (vis-a-vis an understanding of "praxis" as an economic category in the "philosophical" sense), it finds its theoretical use as the prime independent variable within an equation which de-mystifies social action (within the understanding of "praxis" as a scientific category). Although both meanings of economic

category must be seen to apply (after all, science cannot function without some presuppositions about the world), it is to the latter that one must turn to understand, scientifically, what conditions other features of life. (This marks the point of departure of a scientific from a philosophical conception of "praxis"). But in doing so, one is seemingly led to a methodology which conceives of human "praxis" objectively - as a "social fact" subject to determine "social laws"- resulting in the exclusion of any notion of "agency", and therefore to a position which strips, from "praxis", any meaningful content vis-a-vis the social actor as the "self-determining" agent of change.<sup>9</sup>

Is "scientific" Marxism capable of providing a theoretical structure wherein a meaningful concept of "praxis" is expressed? Paradoxically, the answer is yes and no. It is not capable of (nor would it be commensurate with the heart of scientific Marxism - historical materialism) expressing "praxis" as an idealized, and "free" agency of change. This kind of "praxis" theorizing is, from the point of view of scientific Marxism, mere ideology: "the uncritical product of the very system of capitalism...the illusions of 'spontaneity' and 'creativity' which this system has about itself" (Hoffman, 1976: 232). But if not this kind of thinking, then what? How can a notion of "praxis" express itself in contradistinction to the illusion of "praxis", that is, as an imperative of historical materialism? According to Marx it cannot, because the very question of praxis - "whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking" - is a practical question which must be proved in "practice" (Marx, 1845: 13).

But this is more than an epistemological conundrum - it is a real problem which "praxis" theory is being forced to confront. Faced with an ever increasing legitimization of "democratic ideals" - ones which are expressed by the "soft" approach of "Marxist" humanism - Marxist science is being forced to



confront the current changes (i.e. interpretations of) that ostensibly spell the defeat of any idea whatsoever of a Marxist science. While it is the case that a "scientific" Marxism cannot (nor should not) battle a humanist Marxism with its own conception of "what ought to be" (i.e. a contrived "praxis"), a "scientific" Marxism is in need of clarification, whereby "agency" can replace "teleology" as the objective "truth" of human praxis. Granted, this effort - one which is underway - is marked by a return to the question of method, and subsequently becomes an analytical exercise, but it is one which is directed at providing a more concise understanding of the already existing tenets of Marxist science.

The notion of "agency" is central to establishing a viable "scientific" concept of "praxis" - one which can answer the question of "how objective truth can be attributed to human thinking" and therefore how human agency is the prime mover in conditioning other features of life - without giving "praxis" over to philosophy. A Marxist scientific concept of praxis is the concept which must form the basis of a praxis sociology.

### Summary

All three of the "praxes" are committed to an idea of "action" and an idea of emancipation toward which this action is directed as an end. In other words, all three positions contain, within their respective theoretical/philosophical structures, an idea of "praxis": or so I have attempted to argue. In the case of "praxis"-2 this has been shown through an articulation of the concept of "praxis" which is explicitly argued (by proponents of the position) as a central working concept of the position. With the remaining "praxes", the task has been one of teasing the concept from their positions, then ascribing to it the appropriate tenets of their theoretical/philosophical

structures. Neither of these two positions recognize "praxis" as a working concept. Therefore, an underlying argument of the foregoing discussion has been to establish that there are three distinct theoretical/philosophical structures within which "praxis" can be conceived, and as a consequence of establishing this, "praxis" need not (as it most often is) be summarily (and uncritically) equated with a philosophical Marxist humanism (as in "praxis"-2). This argument represents a necessary and crucial first step in establishing the construction of a praxis sociology because it has initiated the possibility for "praxis" to be conceived as other than a philosophical concept and therefore as a potentially viable working concept of the social sciences.

We have seen that it is "praxis"-1's *raison d'être* to argue against this very possibility i.e., the realization of a scientific praxis sociology. "Praxis"-2 holds to the same purpose, although making a number of concessions to a "scientific" methodology. Both "praxis"-1 and 2 would argue that "praxis"-3 is essentially a science of "unfreedom" (as is sociology) and that a concept of "praxis" understood as "emancipatory" action is meaningless within its theoretical structure (a point emphasised by "praxis"-1). It is made so by its ontology which expresses the dynamics of history as teleological ("praxis"-3's axiology) and the social process as structural and deterministic, and by its epistemology which expresses a materialist base of knowledge and the axiology which cannot go beyond stating "what should be" other than by stating what actually is and will be. Both "praxis"-1 and 2's arguments are based on the same "crude" orthodox interpretation of Marxism: arguments which are justifiable given "praxis"-3's, as of yet, underdeveloped notion of praxis.

On the other hand, a scientific conception of "praxis" would argue that "praxis"-1 and 2 are ideologies - that their normative concepts of human

praxis are fanciful abstractions - and that the only reality their concepts can know is as ideology, the very obstacle of a real "praxis". They are both philosophies of "unfreedom", and this "unfreedom" has its source in the Aristotelian ethos which guides "praxis"-1 and the Marxist Humanist ethos which guides "praxis"-2. However, in its orthodox form, a scientific "praxis" is incapable of offering an alternative.

We have, then, three notions of "praxis" and three theoretical structures from which sociology could (theoretically speaking) select the constitutive assumptions - the theoretical/philosophical premises - to form a "praxis" sociology. Yet the choice would appear to be an either/or proposition: either a normative concept or a scientific one, either a philosophical structure or a scientific one. The following section argues why a praxis sociology must form within the latter. (see Appendix C-1 and C-2 for a comparative summary of the "praxes".)

## ENDNOTES: CHAPTER II

1. When I refer to "praxis"-1, "praxis"-2, etc., I am referring to the general theoretical structure of the position (or, the underlying principles in their totality). Also, I have excluded other concepts of "praxis" from this Chapter for the reason that they are "modernized" conceptions of the more traditional understanding(s) of "praxis" whose relevance to this thesis is established as the discussion evolves.

2. The following brief sketch of Aristotle's conception of "praxis" is provided to illustrate the etymological roots of the concept. It is not pursued in this paper as a "contemporary" position for the reason that Arendt's concept is, more or less, the contemporary re-working of Aristotle's "praxis". It is interesting to note that a number of theorists and philosophers have argued that the meaning which Marx himself held for "praxis" was derived from Aristotle's. However, what is argued today as being a "Marxist" concept of "praxis" has little to do with Aristotle's conception. The two "Marxist" conceptions that are explored in this thesis are constructed on the basis of implied meanings found in Marx's writings. Marx himself made only a few cursory (and contradictory) references to the concept.

3. The more precise philosophical way of stating this is: "...general mode of the Being of Beings...as opposed to 'existential'" (Bleicher, 1980: 265).

4. Although the concept may be firmly entrenched as a "working" concept of this position, it is, nevertheless, a concept whose meaning has evolved out of one that is only implied by Marx. Like the other concepts, this concept of "praxis" is open to the challenge which this thesis provides: that "praxis" cannot be assumed to be synonymous with this, or any more general, position. It, like the other concepts, must be critically and comparatively analyzed by bringing to the forefront the underlying assumptions/premises of the more general position within which it is couched, and upon which its specific meaning and theoretical use is predicated. Unlike the other concepts, however, this "praxis" (as noted) is uncritically accepted (i.e. tacitly assumed) as the understanding of "praxis, particularly by sociologists. The following should therefore be read not with the primary focus on the question of whether this "praxis" should be the one which informs a "praxis" oriented sociology, but with the focus on the question of whether the aforementioned assumption should be "undone".

5. Marcovic refers to the experience of Stalinism. It was this "social programming which spurred the search for a new methodological/theoretical base for social programming. Arendt refers to Totalitarianism in general, and, in particular, mentions the Fascist programs of Hitler, but also includes references to communist regimes.

6. These propositions are derived from what Crocker refers to as a "relatively value neutral conception of "praxis". For reasons which I later discuss, Crocker (and many other "Marxists") are seemingly unwilling to accept that "praxis" may be conceived as a wholly "value neutral concept", i.e., as a scientific concept. I have used the propositions which Crocker suggests as a means to elaborate a traditional understanding of a "scientific" concept of "praxis", for the eventual purpose of arguing that a wholly value neutral conception need not be compromised.

7. As a result of this, the theoretical "use" of "praxis" becomes understood as being that of a central concept within an epistemology of social action. Within this philosophy's kindred spirit in sociology, it becomes understood as a central concept within a sociology of knowledge. In both cases, the methodologist (be it the epistemologist or the sociologist of knowledge, respectively), and not the "social actor, is presumed to be the "agent" of change (by virtue of his expertise at sorting out "ideology" from "truth").

8. Another way of presenting this rather abstract proposition is presented, in the following way, by Althusser: dialectical Materialism is a logic which ties together the corpus of economic concepts, which in unity, express a theoretical system. This logic (i.e. dialectical materialism) can be seen as the "continent", while the economic concepts can be seen as the "regions" within this "continent". The "continent" and the "regions" are expressing one in the same thing. It is, however, the "continent" (the logic) which ties the regions together.

9. This criticism is predicated on the erroneous assumption that "praxis" is synonymous with "human agency". The point of this thesis is to argue that this is an uncritical pairing of two highly contentious concepts.

### III. TOWARD A PRAXIS SOCIOLOGY

#### The Challenge of H. Arendt's Praxis

If aestheticism was the criteria used to determine which concept of "praxis" is most appropriate to an understanding of meaningful social action, then Arendt's artfully crafted concept would prevail. It is an idealized conception of political action which is systematically woven into the tight fabric of a traditional normative philosophy. Throughout Arendt's philosophical dialogues one encounters a portrayal of both the ugliness and beauty of the human condition, of life lived of a mundane necessity contrasted with life lived in the "polis" (i.e. "praxis"); of "what there is" contrasted with "what there should and could be". One of its virtues - one which makes it unique among the other praxis positions - is that her philosophy dialogues with all who share the common human condition. It is an appeal to all who inhabit the social world to recapture what has been lost in an age of increasing complexity, in other words to re-capture the political activity of "praxis" - the truly human activity. Further, Arendt's is a seductive argument, for underlying the philosophising of a "forward-looking rationalism" (Fay, 1977), is a strong appeal to man's emotive sensibilities; to his yearnings for "what could and should be" given that there is a universal feeling of discontent and pervasive unhappiness with "what is".

Arendt implores us to "see" what ought to be - what is truly definitive of human existence and therefore "meaningful" - by looking beyond the immediacy of what is given by our senses, and to "doubt" the validity of political ideologies and scientifically derived social "truths" which appear to guide our actions. We should, according to Arendt, hereupon see the realm of the "polis" beyond the immediacy of the "public" (social) realm - a realm wherein action is

guided by rationality, common sense, and universal "political" values (i.e. "plurality"). Within this realm, "praxis" is revealed to us as the manifestation (in action) of desirable qualities of man/woman as individuals; the manifestation (in collective action) of the desirable values of a "plurality" of individuals, and the desirable political context wherein this action becomes possible.

But the beauty of Arendt's concept of "praxis" quickly erodes when confronted with the very real question of what should be done about the problems which plague contemporary life. Because Arendt's "praxis" cannot be theory guided (it is by definition a "novelty"), Arendt would have the social actor (i.e. the masses) await the introduction of "novelty" into the world whereupon man's (i.e. persons "free" of the laboring activity: the leisure class) inherent rationality can utilize this "novelty" to the ends of what is considered human and therefore "ideal". This "end", as we have seen, is arrived at through the process of debate and persuasion among "free" (i.e. those free of a life lived of necessity) men in political association, i.e. political theorists. All the while the social theorist has little choice but to remain silent.

In a world where it is just as "rational" to support nuclear deterrence as it is to support nuclear disarmament, and where exploitation, as part of the "general formula" of Capitalism (Marx, 1867:336) is the embodiment of "rationality" par excellence, Arendt's dictum that we await "novelty", then proceed by throwing our faith into "rationality", is at once dangerously naive and reactionary. But it is not solely by the authority of her central philosophical precept (the epistemological incommensurability of science and politics) that Arendt would wish us to honor this dictum (and consequently that her political philosophy is seen as reactionary); it is for fear that aberrations of history will repeat themselves and social theory will once again serve as the basis for

enslaving man within a manipulative, repressive and misguided dogmatic social practice. There is no suggestion in Arendt's philosophy that these aberrations result from social theory being in the wrong hands, and that in the right hands social theory could serve as an instrument for emancipatory action or as a tool for empowerment. What Arendt seems to be saying is that man is ill-equipped to handle the power that comes with possession of social theory, and that "truth" is simply "an invitation to tyranny" (Luban, 1979). In this Arendt may be correct, or so history would suggest.

Arendt gives a great deal of weight (perhaps too much) to the efficacy of social theory by summarily correlating it with the very real appearances of specific historical aberrations. Accordingly, Arendt directs her attack on social theory to its source in the theoretical practices of sociology and Marxism alike, and, to their manifestations in sociologically informed programming (i.e. social engineering) and ideologically informed "Marxist" revolutions. In doing so, Arendt correctly points to what, on such a broad scale, has only thus far been a theoretical novelty (albeit a continuing propensity) in the history of sociology theory (e.g. Mannheim), but which, on a lesser scale, have appeared as isolated aberrations in the real history of sociological practices (e.g. Taylorism). A harsher reality which truly stands as an aberration in empirical history, and which lends further credence to Arendt's concern (and to her concept of "praxis"), is the example to be found in the history of "Marxism" (the aberration of Stalinism).

"Praxis", irrespective of the theoretical structure within which it is couched, is first and foremost a "call" for social/political action. In the case of "praxis"-1, it is perhaps more accurate to say that it is an urging for political participation. If this "call" (or "urging") is directed at sociology, then it can be understood as a request for theoreticians to structure a prescriptive methodology. There is, therefore more than a passing

suggestion (and the strong possibility for misunderstanding and abuse) that the prescriptive aspect of praxis is implicitly endorsing the practice of social engineering. While this is not the case, given sociology's history, Arendt's concern cannot be ignored. Any social theorist who attempts to construct a "praxis" guided sociology might do well to consider Arendt's argument as a legitimate warning. But to suggest, as Arendt does, that caution must proceed by way of the philosopher cloistering him/herself in the world of contemplation, the social actor (i.e. the "free" actor as political theorist) retreating to the "polis", and the social theorist shrouding him/herself in a veil of silence would seem to invite the very repression that the "solution" is intended to avoid. The passivity of the intellectual, and the participation of the "masses" (i.e. the "free" and presumably influential leisure class) in a dialogical political forum deemed as the legitimate way in which to "act" and express discontent, would seem to be the ideal conditions within which a repressive social regime could arise. This passive "intellectual" utopian society may be sheltered from the "danger" of social theory, but it would certainly be vulnerable to the idiosyncratic whims of a madman. History has had its fair share of these. Arendt's ideal of the "polis" is, in fact, a metaphor for the ideal of participatory democracy which does not require the services of a madman to invite repression into its womb. The ideal Arendt presents is one within which capitalism can, and does thrive, and within which repression is "rationally" acted out upon those who are "trapped" by the mundane necessity of having to labor for their existence.

It is inconceivable that, other than the most mundane of actions, action is not in some way theoretically informed [this error is logically consistent with "philosophy's traditional status of presuppositionless mode of thought" (Fisk, 1976; McCarthy, 1982)]. Social actors, to be sure, do not look to the subtle nuances of theory to guide their actions. Nevertheless, some



understanding of their world is needed, as is some concrete plan of action, to overcome the perceived obstacles of that world. The alternative, as Bernstein aptly notes, is that "action can become just plain dumb" (1977: 156), and worse, "praxis" becomes susceptible to behaviorist explanation.

Praxis, then, of logical, theoretical, practical and political necessity, must be understood as being theory guided. If "praxis" is to have any efficacy in the face of a repressive social/political/economical structure, then a "theory" of "praxis" must identify an obstacle (for the agent of praxis) which is real in its efficaciousness and universal in its relevance. Furthermore, if "praxis" is to escape the "glass bead game" of philosophy it must contain a concise, concrete, and effective action imperative.

Clearly, Arendt's concept of "praxis", although it may provide insights into our eventual understanding of praxis, cannot be considered as being adequate to the task of providing any constitutive assumptions for a "praxis" sociology. It fails to do so for the reason that Arendt succeeds in her aim to articulate "praxis" as a philosophical concept. Whether or not it should remain as such is a question that must be directed at the challenge issued forth by her philosophy and the weight of history that, arguably, supports it. It is, to be precise, up to the "praxis" theoretician to show that

.....there is a way in which our theoretical thinking about man and society may be employed to guide our actions (and especially actions designed to change social practices) without at the same time encouraging a manipulative role for those in possession of this theory. (1977: 201)

This represents the central challenge of praxis theory, one to which "praxis"-2 attempts to responds. If this challenge cannot be met, then perhaps due consideration should be given Arendt's central thesis that "praxis" is, and must remain, a concept of political philosophy, and if so, the gap between

science and politics must be regarded as unbridgeable. As a consequence, sociology would necessarily be characterized as a "mundane" scientific practice.

### Meeting the Challenge of Praxis-1: A Failed Attempt

Whereas the strength of Arendt's "praxis" lies in the aesthetic quality of its Aristotelian ethos, its emotive insights and its evocation of the central challenge of "praxis" theory, the strength of "praxis"-2 lies in the humanistic pretensions and liberal sentiment of its underlying "Marxist" ethos.

Yet "praxis"-2's contentions that "praxis", as social action, seeks to maximize values that are held to be "universal" and that "universal" values "optimize" the emancipatory end of social "praxis", are strikingly similar to the contentions of Arendt's "praxis". Further, the emancipatory intent of "praxis"-2 (to free the social actor from the determinant causal mechanisms of the social structure) and that of "praxis"-1 (to negate the meaningfulness of all scientifically informed theories of social action) are shared: they are merely two distinct approaches directed toward the same end. Free of the causal mechanisms of the social structure (and thus outside the explanatory parameters of science), both Arendt's and "praxis"-2's "beings" of "praxis" are removed as "objects" of a science and become "free" and active "subjects" amenable to the methodology of a normative philosophy. As such, the actions of the agents of "praxis" must, of necessity, be accountable to ethics, morals, values, etc. (i.e. norm guided), otherwise they fall outside of any known parameters for explaining the meaningfulness of action (other than actions being reactive to some internal drive, motivation, etc., i.e. behaviorism). Further, "praxis"-1 and 2 are committed to the argument that these ethics, morals, values, etc. are "universal" i.e. they must be shared by a collectivity (they must be "norms"), otherwise "praxis" theory is led into the terrain of individualistic/psychologistic explanation.

Both Arendt and Marcovic recognize these consequences and therefore argue that the values which guide "praxis" must express what is universal to human existence. However, what is held to be "universal" by Arendt and Marcovic is predicated on two distinct ethical theories. For Arendt, it is a traditional Aristotelian theory of ethics which informs what is "universal"; for Marcovic, it is a critical/ethical theory derived from Marxist thought. Marcovic turns to Marxist thought to establish the ethical guidelines or conditions of social "praxis". By way of this contentious interpretation, six conditions are "revealed" which are held to "optimize" social "praxis".

If one accepts Marcovic's "praxis", then one must also accept that Marxism is an ethical theory - "a moral vision of the good society" (Crocker, 1983). The ontological and epistemological principles of "praxis"-2 provide the underlying foundation to support this contention and the basis for a "world view" wherein the only escape for the social actor - the potential "being of praxis" - from the world of "unfreedom" is to appeal to norms which transcend this world. Marcovic, then, holds steadfast against the suggestion that Marx's axiology is his teleology, wherein the "agent" of praxis (subsumed under the economic category of class) participates (via determinate contradictions) in the law bound process of the increasing "humanization" of man (i.e. toward the final chapter of pre-history). Marcovic's ethical theory outright rejects the significance of "class" vis-a-vis man as a "being of praxis".

The true heart and soul of "praxis"-2 is, then, its "axiology" and it is at this "axiology" that the criticisms of "praxis" must be, and have been, directed. Accordingly, the question upon which "praxis"-2 stands or falls as a viable concept of emancipatory action is whether one believes that Marx, in the analogues of philosophical thought, reigned victorious in his (arguably unwitting) attempt to capture the elusive universal moral/ethical character of human existence. If one rejects this belief (as does this thesis) then

Marcovic's ethical guidelines for "praxis" are so much fiction (ideology). Consequently the ontological and epistemological principles which support this position become methodological redundancies. Clearly, "praxis"-2 is on shaky ground.

In response to Arendt's challenge of "praxis" theory, "praxis"-2 would argue that theory must be understood as "critical theory", and in the hands of "praxis" theorist can serve the interested masses by making "critical" an already existing activity" (Sher, 1977: 106). As such knowledge is, so to speak, already in the back pocket of the social actor and not, therefore, in the possession of the "praxis" theoretician and subject to manipulation. It remains for the theoretician to bring it into view. More precisely, it remains for the theoretician to bring the "critical" knowledge to the consciousness of the potential agent of "praxis". This implies that the "praxis" theoretician is, more or less, a medium for knowledge, and that this knowledge can somehow be accessed by the "praxis" theoretician and remain unaltered as it is fed back to the social actor (in the form of a critical understanding of the social process) as a "call" to action. This connotes the "praxis" theoretician as somewhat of a supernatural epistemological agent in the process of "praxis" as well as the vanguard of emancipatory action. While this bold proposition may be suspect, it is not an isolated or idiosyncratic claim made only by "praxis"-2. Rather, it is a proposition which is supported by the principle of "critical" theory in general. If,

the point of a critical theory is to free people from causal mechanisms which had heretofore determined their existence in some important way by revealing both the existence and precise nature of these mechanisms and thereby depriving them of their power (Fay, 1977:210)

then, clearly "praxis"-2 (understood by reference to Marcovic's three principles

of "praxis" in a "coherent" unity) expresses this same end - "to aid people who are objects in the world in transforming themselves into active subjects who are self-determining" (Ibid: 210). "Praxis"-2's ontology points to the causal mechanisms which thwart man's potential as a being of "praxis". Its epistemology expresses a "dialectically" informed synthesis of aspects of both a positivist and subjectivist methodology into a "critical" theory aimed at uncovering these causal mechanisms (as an antecedent of action). But the "axiology" of "praxis"-2 marks the point of departure from critical theory (and the beginning of its failure as it moves toward normative theorizing) by arguing that "praxis" must be "norm" guided and as a consequence of this, not only the moment, but also the direction of change must be placed in the hands of the "praxis" theoretician, thereby denying the "active subject" complete self-determination of "praxis".

A definitive feature of "praxis"-2 is, then, the symbiotic relationship between "praxis" theorist and social actor because the "praxis" theorist is the indispensable agent in the process of "praxis" who awakens the social actor from the "uncritical" slumber of "habitual" action. While the social actor is the agent of action, the "praxis" theorist is the agent of the critical knowledge (theory) needed to foment and guide this action in the direction of "praxis". Furthermore, it is a relationship guaranteed by the fact that "praxis" theory, by virtue of its complexity (its epistemological, ontological and axiological nuances), makes it all but impossible for "the masses" to possess this "critical tool", let alone grasp the methodology which is needed to apply it to the social world. With "praxis"-2 then, comes the assurance that there is a place for the theoretician/sociologist in the process of "praxis", therefore resurrecting him/her from the redundant role that he/she occupies in Arendt's "praxis" world view.

With the "guaranteed" inclusion of the theorist/sociologist in the process of "praxis" comes the familiar, and objectionable, methodological attitude which holds that theory and practice are two distinct dimensions of life. As such, "praxis"-2 would appear to represent a "praxis" which this thesis is attempting to thwart. Granted, the humanistic/ethical pretensions of "praxis"-2 would allow neither a methodological attitude that reflects, in institutionalized social practices, the calculated "objectivity" of a positivistic attitude, nor the "informed" empathy of a "subjectivist" attitude. Nevertheless, "praxis"-2 reflects a no less abhorrent attitude toward the social actor. In this case it is a moral attitude, or more aptly, a humanistic sentiment, made so by the belief that Marxism is an ethical theory, and therefore the "moral" panacea for the "oppressed" masses. The "praxis" theoretician (as social theorist) is in possession of the theory that uncovers the causal mechanisms which structure man's actions as an object in the world, and this knowledge urges the theoretician (as moral philosopher) to "humanize" social action by evoking (for the masses) self-awareness of this condition for individuals (who remain otherwise, reactive phenomena) and to lead them, via "norm" guided action, in the direction of the "good", "just", and "free" life. As such, the "praxis" theoretician is, at the same time, a moral philosopher and a social scientist.

While this is objectionable from the point of view of the social actor, and may be so from the point of view of sociological practice, "praxis"-2 (i.e. its "Marxist" ethos) has established a strong philosophically argued defense. However, my concern here is with the relationship of this concept of "praxis" to sociology and the ramifications that it would have for the potential agent of praxis, should it be accepted as the praxis to inform the constitutive assumptions of a praxis sociology. Recent attempts at constructing a "praxis" sociology would appear to warrant my concern.

The thrust of a growing "praxis" sociology would, in the name of rejecting the "scientistic" attitude of positivism and the "theoretical imperialism" of "scientific" Marxism, acquiesce to the authority of a moral philosophy as demanded by "praxis"-2. J. K. Benson, for one, argues that:

dialectical analysis is guided by an explicit concern with praxis, i.e., with the achievement of a reasoned basis for emancipatory action - action that removes unnecessary constraints on the development of human societies and opens new possibilities where human productive activity can more freely realize human potentialities for self-organization (i.e., allowing human societies to overcome alienation, to construct their futures freely and rationally (1983, also, 1977).

However, as I have argued, it is the "praxis" theoretician who, in the final analysis is the authority - the instrument to "guide" the potential agent of "praxis". It is, as P. Lather argues, the intellectual who aids " 'developing progressive groups' to become increasingly conscious of their own actions and situations in the world" (1986). And who bestows this authority on the "praxis" theoretician?;

What gives the philosopher the power to determine the moment when theory was to be realized or, conversely, the moment when theory failed to be realized? (Heller, in Rose, 1979:282).

The theoretical structure of "praxis"-2 does so, or more specifically, the normative theorizing that fetishises the otherwise "nothingness" - the illusions a system has about itself - of man's "latent potential" and the "norms" which provoke their realization.

This failing of "praxis"-2 has its starting point in the contention that "praxis" must be norm guided: Arendt's and Marcovic's "praxes" share this contention. Both are led to this position by the belief that there are no laws inherent to the social process which can be argued as being the basis for predicting and guiding social practices. In other words, there are no "axiological" premises that can be accorded to the structural processes of society because "freedom" (of the social actor) is, by definition, removal from them. Consequently, there can be no correct directions for social "praxis", only, as Marcovic states, "optimal" ones. With this we arrive at the crossroads of Marcovic's and Arendt's normative philosophies. While Marcovic is driven ahead by Marxism's call for "activism", Arendt is not obliged to answer any such call; consequently, "praxis"-1 theorists are correctly relegated to the "passive" role of political philosopher. As a further consequence, Arendt avoids the ethical dilemma that Marcovic must now confront: if "praxis" is theory guided and the "praxis" theoretician can know the causal mechanisms of the social process, but not know the direction "praxis" must take (because "praxis" is norm guided the social actor has, so to speak, been lifted out of the causal process to await the word on "what ought to be") then the "praxis" theoretician is left to appeal to norms, which may or may not give rise to the latent potentials which are presumed to be inherent to man. Either way he/she is obliged to act. In other words, the theoretician would appear to have little choice but to experiment. To remain silent would violate the "activism" in Marxist thought by implicitly endorsing the passivity of "praxis"-1.

If science is denied any authority in determining the direction "praxis" should/must take, to what authority must the "praxis" theorist appeal in answering the call to action. Herein lies an ethical problem associated with this "experimental" praxis, and a larger moral philosophical problem associated with the basis of authority on which this "experiment" could legitimately be carried out.



It is questionable whether sociology needs to appeal to such an abstract understanding of social action as "praxis"-2 offers in order to construct a "praxis" sociology adequate to the task of describing and prescribing emancipatory social action. It is, however, on the basis of an ethical consideration, that "praxis"-2 could be outright rejected as the "praxis" for sociology. It is unlikely that any existing or emerging paradigm in sociology would consider such a calculated use of the social actor as the subject of an experiment, and one which is, after all, based on such speculative premises.

The motivation to replace "truth" with "norm guided" social action ("praxis") that is so apparent in "praxis"-1 and 2, issues forth from the attempt to keep "emancipatory" social action (as a subject matter) in the purview of philosophy (be it traditional or Marxist) and out of the hands of a "Marxist science" (i.e. "praxis"-3). To a great extent, Arendt is successful in doing so. It is the very failings of Marcovic's "praxis" which lends credence to Arendt's "praxis" and the argument that it is a concept best suited to philosophical dialogue.

"Praxis"-2 fails Arendt's challenge and in so doing fails to provide the praxis for a praxis sociology. Praxis must be theory guided, and in order that the failings of "praxis"-2 not be repeated, the content of this theory must be "truth", i.e. "objective truth attributed to human thinking". The way to achieve this understanding, and to prevent "praxis" from being relegated to a philosophical abstraction, is to pose "praxis" within the theoretical structure of science. To make it viable as an emancipatory concept, this science must be understood within a Marxist world view.

## Habermas: A Successful Challenge But A Failed Praxis Sociology

A legitimate challenge to a philosophical "praxis" issues forth from the work of J. Habermas. In effect, Habermas argues that the failing of "praxis"-2 (and the success of "praxis"-1) is due to a rigid equating of the idea of "truth" with that of "scientific" social "truth" which in turn results from a polemic against the (arguable) interpretation of Marxism as a "hard" positivist science. In other words, the two "praxes" arise out of a polemic against a perceived ontological understanding of "truth"; specifically, Marx's equating of "truths" with "laws" inherent in structural social processes. More generally speaking, "praxis"-1 and 2 are reacting against "scientifically" informed instrumentalist conceptions of "praxis". Consequently, in their respective efforts to distance their "praxes" from this scientization of the world, the idea of "truth" is replaced with that of the optimal potential of man.

Habermas claims that "truth" may be maintained as a viable precept of social action (i.e. "praxis") theorising without "scientizing" "praxis". "Truth" (he argues) is "linked" (through discourse) to "the intention of the good life (which) can be preserved today only on the ruins of ontology" (1971: 317). But "truth" is conditional because "it is fated to be agreed upon by all who investigate...what we mean by truth" (Pierce, in McCarthy, 1982: 299). As Habermas states it:

I may ascribe a predicate to an object if and only if every other person who 'could' enter into a dialogue with me 'would' ascribe the same predicate to the same object... The condition of the truth of statements is the potential agreement of all others. (Habermas, in McCarthy, 1982: 299)

If this were the case, then there would be no need to replace the idea of "truth" guided action with that of "norm" guided action (as do "praxis"-1 and 2).

Habermas's idea of "praxis" is presented as a "generic" concept which encompasses "two world constituting activities" that make possible two object domains and modes of human knowing and doing" (Crocker, 1983:55). Its affinity with a Marxist "praxis" is assured because it holds in common the starting point to an understanding of social action, i.e. Marx's concept of "human sensuous activity" which encompasses both social action and labour (as interdependent). However, given the increasing intrusion of "instrumental reason" [whose concern is the means adequate to pre-determined ends (Held, 1983:197)] and bureaucracy into the "public sphere" (all aspects of life), there is a need to develop a theory of action and to locate reason within a comprehensive theory of rationality (McCarthy, 1982: 22). In light of this, Habermas argues that it would be a gross over-simplification to reduce all human activity to labour. While "social labor" may serve as a fundamental "category"

of mediating objective and subjective nature  
(and) designates the 'mechanisms' of the  
evolution of the species in history (Habermas, 1971: 29)

Habermas argues that,

Marx...never regarded it as the foundation for  
the construction of invariant meaning structures  
of possible social life worlds (Ibid).

The alternative - the theoretical solution - is to split "praxis" (for analytical and critical purposes), and discuss the problem of contemporary social action within two "domains" of action/knowledge.

Within one domain we find "instrumental action". Its aim is to control reality, that is, to achieve a desired end through the employment of rationally derived knowledge [as provided by the empirical/analytical or nomological

sciences (Crocker, 1983: 55)]. Technical rules are instrumental in guiding action as are the choices or decisions based on rational deductions (Ibid.). The validity of technical rules depends on empirically true or analytically correct propositions (Habermas, in McCarthy, 1982:24).

Within the other domain, we find "communicative action" with its purpose to facilitate "problem solving". It is action governed by "consensual norms" which function to define "reciprocal expectations" for the actors and serve also as sanctions on behavior. The validity of these norms is "grounded" in the "intersubjectivity of the mutual understanding of intentions and secured by general recognition of obligations" (Ibid: 24).

The specific "problem" which Habermas responds to, and one which is strikingly similar to Arendt's, is that with the increasing encroachment of purposeful rational (instrumental) action upon practical action and ethical questions, the public sphere is disappearing. Politics are becoming scientized and communicative action is becoming distorted by "power relations"(Crocker, 1983: 55). However, Habermas does not seek a solution through the resurrection of "archaic" philosophy, but attempts to forge a new position through a broad synthesis of the old with the new - a synthesis of a classical concern with a just, moral and good life (i.e an archaic "praxis") with an evolved theoretical understanding of production as the contemporary "site" for questions concerning the meaningful dimension of life (i.e. a Marxist "praxis").

While Habermas's "praxis" is incommensurable with "praxis"-2, it has a strong affinity with that of Arendt's. Both react to the threat to human freedom by (as Habermas refers to it) the "scientization of politics". Further, both place the solution in the hands of "communicatively generated power". However, as Habermas argues, the potential of Arendt's concept of "praxis" is thwarted by its affinity with the anachronistic "Aristotelian theory of Action" (1977).

Informed by this theory, Arendt is led to argue that because the connection between science and politics is an "unbridgeable gap", the erosion of the "public realm" must be checked by the force of debate with the question of "what is to be done" being an outcome of "persuasion" within this oratory forum (i.e. the "polis"). Habermas can likewise be seen to urge "political participation" and "political discourse" (i.e. a call to "praxis"). However, he replaces Arendt's central notions of debate and persuasion (as the precepts of praxis) with those of discourse and consensus, respectively; the latter de-emphasizing the former's elitist assumption that oratory skills (rather than common communication) are the basis for arriving at "what ought to be". Further, he maintains there is an intimate connection between science and politics (and not, as Arendt argues, an unbridgeable "gap") and that the erosion of public life is a result of the breakdown in the "translation of one domain of knowledge to the other" (i.e. science and politics). In other words, "truth" is the ultimate guarantor of "rational and humane politics" - a "truth" that has been lost in conceptual distortions and subsequently been applied to the wrong domains of human action (i.e. rational to the communicative, communicative to the rational) - and must be arrived at through "dialogical situations leading to "rational consensus omnimini" (Luban, 1979).

Habermas's formulation supports my contention that "praxis" must be guided by an idea of "truth". However, Habermas's idea of "truth" comes by way of discourse and is predicated on what is "consensually" decided. It is not a relativism that he is suggesting - as is evidenced in his corpus of work - and one of the virtues of this dialogical process is that the agent of "praxis" participates in the very process of determining the direction of "praxis". But what is "praxis"? Is it any more than the pragmatic solution wrapped into an instrumentalist problematic? There is no more an idea of freedom present in Habermas's concept of "praxis" than there is in the functionalist paradigm which

his position implicitly endorses. "Truth" and "freedom" are, for Habermas, synonymous, and:

truth is not a matter of correspondence  
with an allegedly independent reality or  
of a rational consensus but of stabilizing  
certainty under the pressure for decision  
(McCarthy, 1982: 230)

In short, Habermas's idea of freedom is synonymous with "truth", and "truth" is synonymous with expediency. In effect, Habermas is offering what might be deemed "a normative theory of efficient action" which, with little modification, can lead to the "generating (of) a set of techniques for achieving given ends" (Bhaskar, 1979: 37).

This theoretical use of "praxis" has already found its way into sociology; specifically, the theoretical underpinnings of Habermas's "praxis" are serving to guide "assessment" and "intervention" during "clinical practices". This budding "paradigm" assumes that "clinical sociology" must (and can) "serve the interests of human emancipation" (Malhotra, 1987: 191) by drawing

more intently on the work of its (sociology's)  
great theorists in its charting of workable,  
non-exploitive practices. Habermas is one  
such theorist (Ibid.).

The underlying (and presumably "emancipatory") purpose of this "paradigm" is to intervene "into various social settings for the purpose of social change" (Gondolf, 1985: 144). In light of the clinical context of the theoretical use of this "praxis" (and the specific social settings within which this "praxis" is exercised), it is difficult to equate this "praxis" with any understanding of emancipatory, and thus meaningful, social change. This being the case, the example of the "clinical" use of Habermas's "praxis" substantiates Bhaskar's

claim (as above) that Habermas's "praxis" is pre-disposed to being used as an "instrumentalist" technique for solving "means-ends" problems. Furthermore, it gives greater weight to my conclusion that Habermas's "praxis" can be understood to legitimate the status quo, rather than criticise and foment meaningful social change.

### Summary

In clearing the way for a scientific praxis sociology, I have argued why "praxis"-1 and 2 are inadequate conceptions for a praxis sociology. In the following chapter, the theoretical weaknesses and limitations of these positions are demonstrated in the context of an actual "social action" program, i.e. newSTART. Before turning to this, there are a number of important considerations to reiterate.

Arendt's concept of "praxis" is, in and for itself, a wholly adequate one because thought and action are conceptualized (via "praxis") as unified dimensions of human existence. As idealistic and abstract as these dimensions are, Arendt manages to capture (in theory) the essence of "praxis" - the unification of thought and activity. While we may be ideologically/politically/methodologically opposed to this "praxis", we have seen that it cannot be displaced by another "normative" conception of "praxis". While "praxis"-2 may provide a concept of "praxis" that is more suitable to forward thinking theorists (in that it is a concept reserved for the "oppressed"), it fails the very essence of "praxis" by portraying theory and practice as two distinct dimensions of life. In effect, "praxis"-2 exemplifies the fact that the activism in Marxist thought cannot be realized in normative theorizing and that praxis is not a subject for meta-ethical philosophising.

In examining Habermas's notion of "praxis", we have moved closer to the theoretical use of "praxis" within sociology. Habermas argues that "truth" must be the theory of praxis. This is a position which this thesis supports. However, Habermas's argument that truth claims are, in the realm of social action, derived from discourse and established by "consensus" is a position with which this thesis takes issue, particularly since this formulation places "praxis" into a functionalist paradigm, violating its implicit tenet of "freedom" by equating it with the idea of efficiency. Nevertheless, Habermas's pragmatic notion of "praxis" has adherents within sociology and is a serious obstacle to the development of an understanding of "praxis" that befits a Marxist science.



#### IV. NEWSTART AND NORMATIVE PRAXIS

##### Introduction

The insights offered by "praxis"-1 and 2 come into clearer focus when the positions are brought into the empirical reality of the newSTART program, a "self-help" employment and educational service run by "ex-offenders" for "ex-offenders". The program began in January of 1986 (modeling itself on the Ontario based "HELP" program) and remained intact and growing until its doors closed in April of 1988. I was involved with the program for a period of approximately 1½ years (for a fuller description of the program, see Appendix B).

As stated (in the Introduction) the newSTART program serves the purpose of this thesis by standing as the substantive case of "social action" programming, by which the general adequacy of both the prescriptive and descriptive tenets of the "praxes" can be tested. However, it should be clear that the thesis is progressing toward establishing a scientific praxis position and, because of this, I am looking (in this Chapter) to substantiate the theoretical weaknesses of the competing "praxis" positions.

There are two general questions around which the analysis of this Chapter is organized. Directed to "testing" the descriptive adequacy of the "praxes" the question reads: can it be said in any specific or general way that newSTART was/had a "praxis", and if so, was it intentional? If not, how does this comment on the adequacy of the notions of "praxis", or conversely, on the adequacy of newSTART to express itself as a "praxis"? Directed to "testing" the prescriptive adequacy of "praxis", the question reads: how, if at all, can the "praxes" be used to guide a program such as newSTART?

Praxis-1 and newSTART\*

The question of describing "what was newSTART" (vis-a-vis "praxis") must, according to "praxis"-1's "world view" (as described in Chapter 2), be first of all directed to the question of: can newSTART, in its totality, be regarded as a theory guided action? If so, then it can be suggested that newSTART exemplifies the antithesis of "praxis", given that Arendt's "praxis" is synonymous with a "novel", and therefore unpredictable, action. On the other hand, if this theory can be argued as not being realized (by newSTART in its totality) then can we attribute this failure of theory to guide action to specific instances of "novelty" which, as Arendt argues, take the form of "speech" and "deeds".

As I have argued, Arendt's "world view" recognizes three distinct forms of "action". The analysis of the newSTART program can therefore be approached by delineating it according to: A. pragmatic action (i.e. mundane administrative action which is neutral vis-a-vis "praxis"); B. theory guided action (i.e. the antithesis of "praxis"); and C. "praxis" (i.e. debate and persuasion provoked by "novelties" which "cannot be figured out").

#### A. newSTART as a pragmatic mundane action; as neutral vis-a-vis "praxis"

One can treat much that went on at newSTART as purely administrative action taken in response to problems associated with any developing non-profit organization. Problems of funding and staffing, problems with the services, etc. can all be regarded as capable of being figured out. Furthermore, on the basis of its ostensible mandate - to find employment for "ex-cons" - its raison d'etre could be regarded as mundane. However, as a non-profit organization, newSTART

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\* The following investigation of newSTART relies on first hand knowledge of the project obtained during the year and a half I worked with it (as its fundraiser, coordinator, and manager), and on the limited material I managed to retain subsequent to the project's closure. Unfortunately, I was denied access to further information and was therefore unable to probe some of the questions in greater detail.

was required to "act" under the direction of its sponsoring body, the Vancouver Eastside Educational Enrichment Society. As such we have to consider the agenda of VEEES and examine the possibility that, behind the appearances of a seemingly mundane collective action, newSTART was being developed according to a theory and thus exemplifies the very antithesis of Arendt's "praxis".

#### B. newSTART as theory guided action; as the antithesis of "praxis"

The question of whether newSTART was, or, was intended to be, a theory guided action (and if so, what was the content of this theory), can be directed to the underlying theoretical position - the "world view" - of the VEEES board. As a society, VEEES is required to state its objectives and purposes in a formal constitution. Upon examination of this text, one finds the reference to the board as having "a wide scope of experience in dealing with convicts and ex-convicts". The "scope" of this experience is referring to the members (of the board) who were (and are) involved with the Prison Education Program (PEP). It is the theoretical underpinnings of this program which hold the key to understanding the theory guided nature (and non-"praxis") of the newSTART program. It requires, therefore, a brief description.

The PEP assumes that the inmate is a rational decision maker and that he/she is in prison because of a decision made in the context of a narrow world view. The solution, it is argued, is to broaden the inmate's world view (via a liberal arts education) whereby his/her future actions will be based on rational decisions made within the context of a self-understanding in relation to the world understood as a more "on-going" or "total historical process". As the co-author of the program (and the Chairman of VEEES) states: "Education can completely transform the mental context in which all future decisions are made irrespective of the material conditions". He refers to this "educational" process as "habilitation" (Duguid, 1981).

The "scientific" assumptions underlying this process of "habilitation" unmask the otherwise liberal sentiments of the Prison Education Program. From "praxis"-1's point of view, they point to the "non-praxis" intention (or mandate of the program. "Habilitation" is premised on the well-known social/psychological theorizing of Kohlberg's "stages of development". Accordingly, the Prison Education Program adopts the view that inmates are "lacking in cognitive development, social skills and moral reasoning ability and that these deficits are related to the facts of their behavior" (Ayers, et. al., 1981). This is a view of the inmate to which the co-author of the Prison Education Program has stated a "commitment" (see, Duguid, 1983). Whether or not this commitment is maintained in his role as Chairman of the VEEES board is another question.

It is, I feel, reasonable to suggest that the interest of the VEEES board in the newSTART project stemmed from a perceived continuity between the Prison Education Program and the newSTART program. Duguid argues that "successful" students leave prison with a broader "world view"; however, the "real" world that they must now confront "remains the same" and "alien to them" (1983). This is a critical period for the "ex-con". Upon entering prison the inmate is assumed to be "egoistic", i.e. stuck in Kohlberg's developmental stage two. Within the confines of the Prison Education Program the inmate is assumed to have grown cognitively and therefore to have developed "morally". However, once back in the community, the "ex-con" must face a different set of realities: realities which the PEP has little control over. In light of the fact that it is an expressed purpose of the PEP to "make students more employable" (Ayers, 1981), newSTART, as a self-help employment service for "ex-cons", would appear to be a natural extension of the PEP. Although there is no "hard" evidence (only recall from conversations I had with a member of the board) to support this claim, it would seem reasonable to suggest that this is the case. Given

this, the newSTART program can be viewed as a logical extension of this program - the next stage of "moral" development. In essence, it is the logical extension of the "scientistic" practices of the Prison Education Program because it is the context (i.e. the community) wherein the process of "habilitation" can be tested against the realities of life back in the community. In other words, the "habilitated" "ex-con" is freed from the prison environment but thereafter continues the process of "habilitation" within the controlled environment of newSTART, under the auspices of theory guided action. If this were the case, then newSTART could be regarded as the antithesis of "praxis". But the newSTART project was terminated by VEEES. Was it the case that newSTART was a failed experiment? Did it fail as a collective action to manifest the next stage of "moral development"? Did newSTART fail to provide the "theoretical" verification of the process of habilitation? The critical question is: can newSTART's failure be understood as a "theoretical" failure, and if so, can this failure be attributed, in fact, to a successful "praxis" - one which refutes the theory which was otherwise attempting to guide newSTART's actions.

### C. newSTART and "praxis"

From the point of view of "praxis"-1, the failure of the newSTART project (i.e. its closing), if attributed to a failure of its participants to reach (as predicted by the implicit behaviorist theory of the VEEES's board) the next stage of moral development, could be attributed to a successful "praxis" on the part of the project's participants. This would indeed be the case if such a "failing" can be attributed to the participants' intentional effort, through "speech and deeds", to take the project (as a collective action) towards an ideal when novelty presents itself. We can direct our attention then to the question of whether or not newSTART had specific occurrences of this intentional action within the life time of the project. In doing so we will have to

consider two further conditions of "praxis"-1: that these occurrences appear as novelties which "cannot be figured out", and not as problems that can be administered; and, that the motivation for "praxis" (although not the decisive thing) is directed toward "the world and not yourself" (i.e. a universal ideal and not an individualistic "value").

Although there were a number of instances in newSTART's history which provoked heated debate, two evolved into a "political" forum and therefore have the possibility of being understood as "praxis". These two forums were provoked by the community of "political" non-profit agencies' implicit (and at times explicit) demands for newSTART to articulate its political philosophy and newSTART's inner-core desire for autonomy from the VEEES board. Both of these forums spoke to the growing politicization of the project.

But newSTART failed to "politicize" for the reason that it could not successfully challenge the theory (s) that were guiding it as a collective action. By this, I am suggesting that both the "habilitative" agenda of VEEES (i.e. the behaviorist theory guiding its actions vis-a-vis newSTART) and the "rehabilitative" model which (arguably) the community expected newSTART to express, trapped newSTART into expressing "correct" actions. That is to say, that the very legitimacy and success of the program were measured (by VEEES and the community) by its ability to collectively express ethics, values, morals, etc. that were non-threatening and in line with the community's expectations. To have done otherwise - to express newSTART as a political "agency" - would not only have been disastrous for the project's existence, but would inevitably have drawn "heat" to the project and jeopardized the status of many of the project's participants. This aside, the question that must be posed of "praxis"-1 is: given these theoretical strictures, how could "praxis"-1 have aided newSTART to go beyond a program guided by "social theory"? Given the "trap" that newSTART was in, how, if at all, can "praxis"-1 be used to guided a

program such as newSTART? The answer is that it cannot offer any prescriptive tenets. The reason is quite simply (and ironically) that, "habilitation" and "rehabilitation" share with "praxis"-1 the understanding that "correct" action is action which is guided by consensual and universal morals, ethics, etc. In this case, social theory and philosophy can be seen to share the common tenet that "praxis" is norm guided action. Consequently, both would have newSTART remain "trapped within its "habilitative"/rehabilitative mandate.

Invoking "praxis"-1 to test its descriptive adequacy vis-a-vis newSTART creates a paradox. If newSTART was indeed an experiment informed by a social/psychological theory, then according to "praxis"-1, newSTART is the very anti-thesis of "praxis". But if, on the other hand, the two specific occurrences of debate and dialogue were accorded a status of potential "praxes", then the very thing that thwarted them - the need to remain within a rehabilitative mandate by expressing "universal values" - is the basis for understanding that "praxis" has occurred (according to "praxis"-1).

In conclusion, what is clear is the fact that the newSTART example points to the inadequacy of a norm-guided "praxis". Not only this, it suggests that "praxis"-1 is commensurate with the concept of "habilitation" and therefore not autonomous from (and immune to) social theory as Arendt would have us believe.

### Praxis-2 and newSTART

This time the question of "praxis"'s descriptive adequacy must be reformulated to state: was newStart structured according to the normative ideals of "praxis"-2? In other words, was it a norm guided action? As I have argued, only the "praxis" theorist can know the true content of these "norms" - he/she is an indispensable participant (and agent) in the process of "praxis" - and therefore our descriptive analysis would have to presuppose that there was a

"praxis" theoretician actively involved in the newSTART project. Of course, this was not the case, and therefore a "praxis"-2 descriptive analysis of newSTART is rendered meaningless. However, because "praxis"-2 argues that "praxis" is "norm" guided action we can ask how should newSTART have been constructed? Further, by utilizing the prescriptive tenets of "praxis"-2, we are able to confront the "scientistic" theory which (arguably) guided and "trapped" the collective action(s) of newSTART within "normative" theory, to see if this theory provides the basis for alternative action(s). Moreover, because these "norms" are informed by "Marxist" ethics, we are also able to challenge the concessions to the status quo, as expressed by a "traditional" normative theory of action. As a result, we may pose the question: does the content of "praxis"-2's theory (i.e. social/democratic ideals) provide the prescriptive tenets whereby newSTART can be seen to escape the "universal" ideals (explicit in "praxis"-1, and implicit in "habilitation") which "trapped" it, and do they express a viable "emancipatory" action program - one that is appropriate to the nature of the newSTART program? We may turn directly to the question of "praxis"-2's prescriptive adequacy.

#### The Prescriptive Adequacy of "Praxis"-2

The prescriptive question reads: how (if at all) can "praxis"-2 be used to guide a program such as newSTART. The focus for exploring this question is the self-management model developed by the Yugoslavian Praxis School (in particular, Marcovic and Stojanovic). This model is, more or less, structured upon the theoretical principles of "praxis"-2 (as discussed in Chapter Two) and provides the focus for formulating social action programs according to these principles. The "normative" purpose of the model is to structure social/political/cultural/material programs in such a way that they optimize the potential of an individual as a being of "praxis" and optimize the possibility of a



collective (i.e. society wide) "praxis". As such, self-management is the tool by which this social ideal is realized in action. It is, therefore, within the context of this model that we must attempt to understand newSTART as a potential "praxis".

There are four levels of self-management to be found in the model and each level is comprised of various "organs" with concomitant functions, responsibilities, duties, etc. In totality, these levels are argued to provide a comprehensive picture of how society should be organized if the system of self-management were intact. In essence, the model is an "ideal type", but one which is abstracted from a vision of "what ought to be", rather than from approximations of what "actually is". The question of the prescriptive adequacy of "praxis"-2 vis-a-vis newSTART is then a hypothetical one and moreover, it is one which requires an unflinching belief in the "social ideals" of "Marxism". With this in mind, we can approach the question of how a program such as newSTART would fit (if at all) into this "ideal" system of self-management.

Assuming the need for a newSTART program in this system, newSTART would "fit" into the first level of self-management as a "basic organ" (Crocker, 1983:295) within a "network of worker's councils in the factories, services, and all other types of local communities" (Marcovic, 1974:235). It would be an "enterprise" of the type which "produces culture and education" as distinct from the type which produces "material goods" (Crocker, 1983:295). Within the limits of policies and existing legislation, it would have:

full freedom to decide what to produce, what kind of services to offer, with whom to co-operate, how to organize work, (and) in which direction to develop (Marcovic, 1974: 235).

In other words, a newSTART program could be what, in reality, it was aspiring towards - self-determining.

There are, however, very real obstacles or limitations (which Marcovic notes) that would arise (and which therefore must be confronted) within this ideal model of self-management. Such limitations may be, in part, validated by the experience of the newSTART project.

First, members of such organizations (argues Marcovic) tend to be more interested in issues which affect them directly and immediately (eg. wages) than in those broader political/economic issues. The solution, he argues, is in a "prolonged education" for the members (Ibid). The newSTART experience, too, indicates that "self-interest" is a very real problem. The solution is also one that was recognized by newSTART's attempt to construct "educational" programs. newSTART had "educational" programs in place, but there was an on-going problem to determine what form of education program was appropriate to "free" the individual from, as Marcovic implies, his/her inherent egoism. Marcovic's model does not address this critical problem.

A second limitation that Marcovic points out is the danger of small "oligarchies" forming within the organization, and the tendency for management to assume full control over the council" (Ibid). He attributes this to two factors: first, outside powers (i.e. political factors) will support the organization in return for "its unquestionable loyalty and obedience when needed" (Ibid: 236); second, the outside powers have greater access to information and are therefore capable of manipulating the members of the organization through the "appropriate selection and interpretation of data" (Ibid). In bringing this into the context of the newSTART experience, the first thing to determine is, who should be considered as members of the organization and who should be considered as the outside powers? We can determine this by exploring the organizational dynamics of newSTART as a non-profit agency.

The typical organizational dynamics of a non-profit agency are such that the project clientele are the responsibility of the project staff, the project

staff's actions are the responsibility of the Board, and the Board is accountable to the community at large. newSTART's dynamics were somewhat atypical. As newSTART was an across-the-board "self-help" organization, there was, by definition, no distinction between "staff" and "client", and as such, newSTART (unwittingly) accommodated the basic procedural requisite necessary for VEEES to exercise its "habilitation" agenda, i.e. all project participants are "ex-cons", albeit, at presumably different levels of "habilitation", or "moral" development. This being the case, the "outside power" - the factor contributing to a limitation imposed on a ideal model of self-management - would refer not to the project staff's power over the clients, but to VEEES's power over the newSTART project. As such, we might expect newSTART to form "oligarchies" with "unquestionable loyalty" to the "outside powers", i.e. VEEES, if Marcovic's limitation is to be validated. The newSTART experience (arguably) validates this limitation, in the following way.

As far as possible, the decision-making process at newSTART was a democratic one. Because of the self-help nature of the project (and within practical limitations), all decisions concerning newSTART's direction and development were decided on the basis of "what the clients wanted". This procedure was ostensibly endorsed and encouraged by VEEES. However, on one occasion, VEEES requested that newSTART construct a literacy/life skills program targeted at meeting the needs of "sex-offenders". Subsequent to "surveying" the clients' opinion (who overwhelmingly rejected the idea), the staff met with VEEES to present the reasons why the request was to be denied. The request was then issued as an order which the staff, save two, refused to act upon. As a result, the staff were fired and the project was closed. Three months later VEEES opened another project and staffed it with the two who had sided with VEEES, and who were, interestingly enough, the only two members of newSTART who were successful graduates of the Prison Education program.

There is another way to validate Marovic's second limitation vis-a-vis the newSTART experience. It can be suggested that VEEES attempted to maintain full control over the project for reasons of VEEES' loyalty and obedience to the greater power controlling it - the politics of the Criminal Justice System (CJS). It is conjecture, but nevertheless reasonable to suggest, that in return for future funding considerations (and existing ones), Veees had to sponsor projects that reflected the needs and current philosophy of the CJS. This, and the fact that two of the VEEES board members were employed in an organization that was substantially dependent on the CJS for funding, left VEEES with no clear alternative but to accede to the CJS. The board's "request" for newSTART to construct a program for sex-offenders can therefore be understood as VEEES expressing its loyalty and obedience to a "need" of the CJS.

The second contributing factor which Marcovic points out is the use of expert knowledge to maintain control over those who do not have access to this knowledge. In the example of newSTART we can understand this limitation as being negated, since the members of newSTART, through experience and education, were able to acquire the expert knowledge necessary to dialogue directly with the funding, political, and bureaucratic "powers" upon which newSTART's development depended. As a result, the power that VEEES held over newSTART diminished, ultimately spelling the downfall of the project.

The newSTART experience, as incidental as it may appear to be in the context of Marcovic's "big picture", does suggest that he is correct in saying that,

the power of these small informal oligarchic groups certainly decreases insofar as workers get political experience and become aware of new forms of class struggle. (Ibid: 236)

It is the case that the power of VEEES decreased with an increase in the

political awareness (leastwise the recognition that newSTART must express itself as a political entity) of newSTART's staff. It is also the case that VEEES' power over newSTART decreased with newSTART's increased ability to deal with the pragmatics of a non-profit organization. However, if Marcovic is suggesting that the overcoming of limitations is possible within the present social structure, then the failing of newSTART would seem to suggest that this is not the case. The present organizational structure of non-profit agencies cannot accommodate the necessary prerequisites - the overcoming of limitations of democratic self-management - of societal "praxis". In other words, the move toward "praxis", in the case of newSTART, presupposes a structural change in the power relations (organizational dynamics) of non-profit organizations, and this organizational structure, as we are well aware, is firmly entrenched (by definition and otherwise) in the broader structure of a capitalist system.

The third limitation factor on self-management is related to the previous one in that it focuses on the power relationship between the political bureaucracies, the management of a political organization (or "enterprise"), and the organization's members. The dynamics of this limitation are such that it is in the best interest of the political bureaucracy to maintain a "poorly educated and incompetent manager" of the organization in order that the "proposed line" (of the political bureaucracy) can be "pushed through" (Ibid: 236). In the context of the newSTART experience, we can see how, in the early stages of the program, the manager of the project served the purposes of the VEEES board. Policies, procedures - the proposed line - could be "fed" directly to the project with little resistance from the management. The project was, more or less, a manifestation of the purposes and objectives of VEEES's constitution and in line with VEEES's political masters (i.e. the CJS). As the project developed, its management reflected a higher degree of education and social/political awareness. It is therefore understandable why, when the project

closed, VEEES fired all the politically conscious and outspoken "critics", and retained those who were politically/socially disinterested. Seen in this light, one is led to agree with Marcovic's proposition that:

There is no doubt that the disappearance of political parties at a high stage of post-capitalist development would be an enormous step forward in the evolution of self-management (Ibid:237).

As hypothetical as this analysis is, it nevertheless adduces some pertinent insights. It leads one to consider newSTART's failings from the point of view of political/economic analysis. Furthermore, irrespective of whether or not the self-management "vision" is ascribed to, we are still led to consider newSTART's problems within the context of the social/political structure. In other words, when contrasted with a vision of "what could and ought to be", the "actual" limitations on newSTART are brought to the forefront.

If one were to accept that the self-management model is indicative of "what ought to be", then one should consider the further pre-conditions of its realization. These pre-conditions are the explicit antecedents to "praxis", i.e., they are propositions which may be taken as a guide to structuring social action to foment the eventual realization of the system of self-management. They are still prescriptive tenets of "praxis"-2, but they are a step closer to the reality of the contemporary world. They present another way, therefore, to test the prescriptive adequacy of "praxis"-2 vis-a-vis newSTART. Accordingly, the question directed at testing the prescriptive adequacy of "praxis"-2 must be modified to ask: how could a program such as newSTART be organized to facilitate these pre-conditions (if at all)?

There are four pre-conditions for self-management: technical, material, political and cultural (Marcovic, 1965: 189ff). newSTART, based upon what it

was, can be understood in the context of three pre-conditions (i.e. as either attempting to fulfill, or, thwart them).

The technical pre-condition assumes that routine and disagreeable jobs create a condition of disinterest among the workers which results in them gaining no competence in the area of self-management. Consequently, the necessary requisite of competence and interest on the part of self-management participants would be lacking. The material pre-condition assumes that if wages are not sufficient to satisfy basic needs then this results in the workers losing initiative. If this is a society-wide condition (i.e. a non-affluent society) then, argues Marcovic, this lack of initiative (and interest) is manifest in the deterioration of educational and cultural programs (themselves pre-conditions for self-management) (Ibid: 191). In the context of the newSTART program, these pre-conditions can be understood in the following way.

newSTART's employment service placed its clients into, for the most part, disagreeable and low paying jobs. Although there was a growing discontent (among the staff) with this service ("we're contributing to the exploitation of our clients"), the need to acquire good job placement statistics (as a rationale for further funding), the need for the clients to "put a few bucks in their pockets", and the knowledge that the project could not stand alone on its marginal educational programs, necessitated its continuation. In effect, newSTART was working against both the technical and material pre-conditions for self-management.

Insofar as there was discontent with the employment service and a resulting ongoing dialogue among the staff to try to resolve the problem, and insofar as the educational services were in a constant state of reformulation, it might be suggested that newSTART was attempting to facilitate a program to meet the pre-conditions of self-management. It is, however, unrealistic to think that newSTART would, or could, achieve a "praxis". That is to say that just as it

is doubtful that Marcovic's vision of self-management could be realized within the contemporary structure of capitalism, so it is unreasonable to think that newSTART could express this vision within the concomitant structure of contemporary non-profit organizational dynamics.

Invoking "praxis"-2 to "test" its prescriptive adequacy vis-a-vis newSTART leads to an understanding of the actual limitations on the newSTART program. It brings to the forefront the fact that the major limitation on newSTART's aspiration for self-determination is the power relations within the formal organizational dynamics of the project, the board, and the relevant appendage of the state; in this case, the Criminal Justice System. In other words, one is led to consider newSTART within the context of the distribution of power that exists, hierarchically, within contemporary capitalist society. In order, then, to validate the prescriptive tenets of "praxis"-2, they should be seen to address this obstacle which stands in the way of newSTART as a "praxis". But they do not, and consequently, we must conclude that the prescriptive tenets of "praxis"-2 are inappropriate and invalid vis-a-vis the newSTART program. The potential "being of praxis" (the sum total of his/her latent dispositions) will, accordingly, remain trapped (as human essence) because the structure of non-profit organizations is one which will not allow the ideal of "self-management" to form and develop.

It is by virtue of newSTART being, for the most part, a "typical" non-profit organization, attempting to develop its "legitimacy" within a traditional NGO structure, that we may draw the above conclusion. Ironically, we may conclude that "praxis"-2 (unwittingly) provides the following (implicit) prescriptive tenet, and (implicit) call for structural change: self-management social action programs must develop outside the current "legitimate" (and formalized) organizational structure of non-profit agencies.



## Conclusion

A norm guided "praxis", whether guided by "traditional" or "Marxist" ideals, fails to provide an adequate conception of praxis. At the level of theory (as discussed in Chapter Two), it is plagued with irresolvable problems. It is incommensurable with the very idea of social sciences and therefore confounds any attempt to bring it into the context of any reasonable method of sociological analysis (as argued in Chapter Three). Furthermore, apart from these theoretical/methodological problems (problems that were substantiated in Chapter Four), its "moralizing" attitude - its accession to the authority of moral philosophy - is offensive to an understanding of concrete actions of the oppressed in the real world: a reality it is incapable of capturing.

The specific failure of "praxis"-1 can be, as I have argued, attributed to its successful attempt to articulate a philosophical concept of "praxis". It is only a failure, therefore, if one sees the promise of "praxis" as a sociological concept, and sociology as a social science. Because it holds no pretense of being a theory guided action - it is by definition, otherwise - it cannot be of any use to sociology. In Chapter Three, I argued that "praxis"-1 contributes to our understanding of praxis by raising the central problem of praxis theorizing. I suggested that this problem is one which stands as a challenge to the social sciences, since praxis theory must be capable of arguing that theory can guide praxis, and moreover, it must do so without allowing theory to be understood as being manipulated by those in possession of it, i.e., the praxis theorist. In this Chapter, the theoretical failure of "praxis"-1 is re-demonstrated as it attempts to give meaning to the newSTART program, i.e., its inherent theoretical weaknesses are substantiated; specifically, its inability to provide the prescriptive basis needed to take newSTART beyond its "mundane" and "theory guided" status.

"Praxis"-2 succeeds neither in articulating a philosophical conception of "praxis" nor one that is adequate for a praxis sociology. It denies "praxis" a philosophical status by arguing, in accord with the action imperative of Marxism, that "praxis" must be theory guided. On the other hand, it fails sociology (and Marxism) by arguing, in opposition to a scientific conception of praxis, that "praxis" must be guided by "norms", and moreover, "norms" which are the subject matter for the "praxis" theoretician (i.e. the social "scientist" as moral philosopher). The source of such failings - the underlying principles of "praxis"-2 - were brought to light in Chapter Two, where it is clarified that "praxis"-2 conceptualizes theory and practice as two distinct dimensions of existence (an error that "praxis"-1 does not make). Consequently, when considering the idea of this "praxis" as the praxis for sociology, one sees that it is replicating the dichotomy of positivism and subjectivism. One is led, therefore, to anticipate that, were it the case that social practices (i.e. praxes) were informed by "praxis"-2, then we would be merely replacing the authority of behaviorism (or some other agency of "scientistic" social practices) or "liberal" pseudo-empathy with the "moral" authority of "Marxist" social ideals. This would be unacceptable from an agent of praxis' point of view and would violate the very essence of praxis.

In Chapter Four I put these theoretical failings on hold as I "tested" "praxis"-2 in the context of newSTART. It was concluded that "praxis"-2 presupposes the existence of a "praxis" theoretician ("praxis" is theory guided) which would render a retroactive descriptive analysis of newSTART meaningless. Turning then to the prescriptive tenets of "praxis"-2, I counterposed newSTART to the "ideal" of democratic self-management. This "ideal" was shown to express, in part, some of the goals toward which newSTART was aspiring. The example of newSTART also suggested that the "ideal" gave rise to fundamental problems which confront agencies "trapped" within the structure of non-profit

organizations in our contemporary capitalist system.

Based on the consideration of "praxis"-1 and 2, it would appear that "praxis" is a concept best left to the realm of philosophy and in the hands of competent moral philosophers such as Hannah Arendt. I would reason this conclusion on the basis that it is better to understand "praxis" as passive metaphor than to mistakenly believe the illusion that it can actively inform the construction of a norm guided "praxis" sociology. But we need not arrive at this conclusion.

In Chapter Three, I gave a brief overview of Habermas's conception of "praxis" ("praxis"-4), arguing that this concept of "praxis" provides a viable alternative to a norm guided "praxis" for the reason that it provides an understanding of "praxis" as being "guided" by an idea of "truth". This is the only way that a philosophical understanding of "praxis" can be challenged. In criticism of Habermas, however, I suggested that while this "praxis" may be argued as a viable sociological concept, it was tied to a functionalist perspective since Habermas's idea of "truth" is modified by pragmatism and, as a consequence, the idea of "freedom" (in "praxis") responds to an instrumentalistic rationale; hence, a normative theory of efficient action. The idea of "praxis" as an "emancipatory" action - one which serves the "oppressed" - is summarily compromised. This is unacceptable and we are left in a quandary, or more precisely, with an ideological/methodological dilemma. If it is the case that Habermas's "praxis" provides the only real challenge to "praxis"-1, then one must either accept "praxis" as a concept of functionalism, or yield it to philosophy. "Praxis-3, however, offers an alternative.

"Praxis"-3, is also an inadequate conception of "praxis", but only insofar as it is understood in the context of an orthodox understanding of a Marxist science. When modified (i.e. updated) by more recent theoretical

interventions into the question of a Marxist science, "praxis"-3 can be fortified and the philosophical concept of "praxis" can be effectively challenged.

This brings us to the final chapter of this thesis - the proposed direction the praxis argument must take, and the specific arguments that must be made, if a true conception of praxis - one which lends itself to the understanding of sociology as an emancipatory social science - is to be established.

# V. A PROPOSED DIRECTION FOR THE FORMATION OF A PRAXIS SOCIOLOGY

## Praxis Must Evolve Out Of An Understanding Of "Praxis"-3 As A Starting Point

As we have seen, "praxis"-3 is an uncompromising attempt to establish social action as a "meaningful" subject of scientific explanation and as a "meaningful" object for on-going investigation. This meaningfulness of praxis is, however, only a theoretical meaningfulness derived from the understanding of "praxis" as the prime variable in interplay between economic concepts - the rational abstraction (s) of universal laws and regularities (see, p. 45) - which, in their totality, "explain" what conditions other features of life. They explain, in other words, how the infra-structure "conditions" the super-structure; how, respectively, the "essence" of the social process (the laws and tendencies) "conditions" "outward" appearances while remaining distinct from and autonomous of them. In effect, the meaningfulness of praxis as a scientific concept comes by way of its status as a working concept of Marx's political economic method. This methodology executes the aim of Marx's science - "to lay bare the law of motion of modern society" (Marx, 1867:297) - by formulating the "primary equation lying behind" outward appearances, thus providing a "correct grasp of the present" and "foreshadowings of the future" (Ibid:252).

Marx is stating a truism when he suggests that "science would be superfluous if the outward appearances and the essence of things directly coincided" (Marx, 1864, in Hoffman, 1975: 93). It is the definitive property of a Marxist science that the essence of things - the "real subject"(of science) existing autonomously "outside the head" (Marx, 1857-1858: 238) - must be sought in the economic structure of society and expressed in the form of "rational abstractions"(i.e. its variants expressed as economic categories). If praxis is to be understood as a concept of Marxist science, then it must be understood as a

subject of that science; as an economic category and therefore as an objective conditioning force. If it were not assigned this conditioning property, then we might view it as exhibiting the positivist epistemology often attributed to a Marxist science. On the other hand, once it is embedded in a Marxist science it becomes accountable to the criticism that it is part of an overly deterministic and teleological science, making its quality of "force" (i.e. agency) seem wholly superfluous. In other words, an attempt to articulate a meaningful content for praxis within a scientific Marxism underscores the point that what a scientific Marxism lacks is "a point of contact" (and concomitant cognates) between "human agency and the social structure....linking action to structure" (Bhaskar, 1979: 51). This "point of contact" cannot, however, be sought externally in a normative philosophy: it must be established within the understanding of a scientific theoretical structure.

When understood as a working economic category of Marxist science, our understanding of praxis' meaningful content cannot go beyond conceptualizing it as a constituent assumption of Marxist science, or, more specifically, as an ontological antecedent of "class" - no more or no less a critical concept of Marxist theorizing - which expresses "how the agents of production stand in respect to Nature, and to one another ... (and the way)...in which they produce is precisely society" (Marx, 1867: 439). Without having a clear understanding of praxis as "agency" it is difficult to take praxis beyond its questionable usefulness as a merely descriptive concept of Marxist science to a concept that expresses the activism inherent in Marxism, with its point to change the world.

#### Praxis Cannot Evolve Out Of A Compromised "Scientific" Marxism

Because praxis is uncritically assumed to be synonymous with a normative conception of human agency (as in "praxis"-2) - an assumption often qualified by

off-handed reference to the "failure" of Althusser's structuralism to articulate a meaningful concept of agency - the theoretical structure of a Marxist science has evolved in the direction of a compromise. This compromise is evidenced by a formalized position which equates a Marxist "scientific" understanding of "praxis" with a "relatively value neutral conception" (see, Crocker, 1983: 51-53, emphasis mine). The faulty, and therefore understandably tacit assumption of this position is: a "Marxist" science can be theoretically married to a "Marxist" philosophy but the former retains methodological control over the latter's insistence that a pervasive and imaginative consciousness (i.e. a normative cognate of agency) exert itself on matters concerning the "meaningful" direction of social change (i.e. "praxis"). Typically, this position takes Marxist structuralism's central principle as its starting point, that is, "the 'determining' structure, which is - from a Marxist standpoint - the mode of production of material life" (Bottomore, 1978: 592). Accordingly, it proceeds to argue that Marx's "economic categories" may be brought to the forefront of analysis as a means of showing how "the economic structure of competitive capitalism impose(s) certain requirements on economic actors" (Applebaum, 1978). Then, by means of a "theory of crisis of capitalist production, these requirements would be shown to lead to contradictory outcomes which undermine the structures themselves, creating opportunities for conscious political action" (Ibid., 1978). While the position accepts structuralist explanation that autonomous and efficacious structures are the correct sites for posing the question of what conditions other features of life, when it comes to the question of what determines the correct direction of social change, the position yields to the voluntaristic tenets of a Marxist humanism and quickly turns to an epistemological idealism for an explanation. In other words, the position voices a commitment (i.e. it is premised on the constituent assumptions) to the ontology of a Marxist science and the axiology of a Marxist philosophy.

As such, it compromises the integrity of a Marxist science when it concludes that: " a properly organized and politically conscious working class has the potential of totally abrogating the laws of capitalist economics through the establishment of a planned socialist economy" (Applebaum, 1978).

While an idea of agency is necessary to a complete and meaningful understanding of praxis, this understanding cannot be arrived at by "marrying" Marxist philosophy with Marxist science. What Applebaum (and others of his ilk) is suggesting is that a "Marxist" normative conception of "praxis" (as in "praxis"-2) can be coupled with the theoretical structure of a scientific Marxism (as in "praxis"-3). As I have demonstrated (in Chapter II), both of these conceptions are only meaningful because of the respective theoretical/philosophical structures which support them. In other words, they are concepts which are encompassing of the broader system of ideas within which they are couched. One cannot simply extract a meaning of "praxis" from a philosophical system of ideas and attempt to place this meaning in the theoretical structure of science. This is more so the case when we are dealing with Marxism. The intellectual history of Marxism contains numerous examples of the attempts (and the consistent failures) to "marry" the opposing forces of Marxist science and Marxist philosophy.

It is the product of uncritical thinking to propose a relatively value neutral concept of praxis; to balk, and then summarily close the door on the idea of a wholly "scientific" conception of "praxis". Rather than embrace the possibility of this idea and proceed to pinpoint, confront and then offer "corrections" for the inherent weaknesses of scientific Marxism's theoretical structure (as R. Bhaskar does), or re-direct the meaningful scientific content of "praxis" to another factor of "objective" human existence (i.e. "dialectic laws of cognition", as N. Carcedi does) they - the compromising "praxis" theorists - implicitly accept structuralism as a "failure" and as the foregone



conclusion of attempting to construct human "praxis" as a scientific concept. As a result of this "uncritical" attitude, these "Marxists" either flee to the "humanist" pretensions of philosophical Marxism, or (as Applebaum does) suggest compromises for the presumably untenable scientific conception of "praxis". Inevitably, this lends further support to Arendt's conception of "praxis" and to the argument that "praxis" is the concern of "philosophy".

If a concept of praxis is to have a sufficient meaningful content, within a scientific Marxism, then the positivist excesses of Marxism must be avoided; and if a Marxist science is not to be compromised, then a viable and sufficiently meaningful cognate of human agency must be established within this science.

#### Praxis Must Begin Its Formation Within A Structuralist Methodology

To initiate a correct understanding of praxis - praxis as a scientific concept - one must accept that there is no unified scientific understanding of "praxis", and therefore there is no shared understanding of its "failure". For example, although Althussarian structuralism is a variant of Marxist science, it is not the only variant of Marxist science, nor the only variant of Marxist structuralism. The possibility of praxis as a scientific concept cannot therefore be summarily and sweepingly rejected by uncritically rejecting structuralism per se, especially since in attempting to conceive "praxis" within the theoretical structure of a Marxist science, one is led to conceptualize social reality as a composite of efficacious and determinate structures; hence, structuralism is (by definition) the appropriate methodology of a Marxist science. It is correct, however, to recognize the difficulty of arriving at an understanding of praxis as meaningful action when the determinate social structure is seemingly given primacy over any idea whatsoever of human agency.

The question of "what conditions other features of life" must remain the central question of a Marxist science for the reason that it clearly implies the central premise of a science, that outward appearances (features of life) do not coincide with their essence (that which conditions), and thus provide the *raison d'être* of science, inclusive of Marxist science. However, a Marxist science must be capable of expressing a way in which "essence" is seen to coincide with "appearances" because this is the distinguishing proposition of Marxist science as an emancipatory science. In other words, it must be able to express how the question of "objective" truth (i.e. essence) is, in certain cases (possible or actual), attributable to human thinking. How, in other words, human practice (i.e. "praxis") expresses the coalescence of objective truth and human thinking - the self-obsolescence of a Marxist science in the context of human praxis. If "praxis" is to have any relevance beyond expressing this coalescence as the "beginning of human history" (i.e. as a utopian vision wherein the social structure coalesces with the collective perfectible essence of mankind), it must be temporally situated in our contemporary social structure. It must, in other words, be appropriate to more particularized instances than an otherwise total transformation of the social structure.

The correct methodological framework within which to couch this understanding (i.e. one which remains logically and theoretically consistent with the principles of a scientific Marxism) is, arguably, structuralism. It is structuralism which attempts to consider productive relations from the "stand-point of (society's) economic structure" (Marx, 1867:439). This being the case, then (paradoxically) praxis must be understood as an efficacious, structural and historical force while it rejects (as a component of its meaningful content) any subjective indicant of human agency as having any causal significance in determining "what conditions other features of life". This proposition should only be considered problematic (and paradoxical) if one has accepted the

assumptions that: 1. the idea of praxis is synonymous with a normative conception of human agency; and, 2. structuralism is incapable of articulating an alternative concept of "praxis" as agency. Both of these assumptions are faulty. The first has been repeatedly challenged throughout this thesis; the second, has been challenged by two relatively recent structuralisms. Both of these positions develop (implicitly) a scientific conception of human praxis on the recognition that a scientific Marxism ("praxis"-3) fails to articulate a meaningful concept of praxis because it lacks "the point of contact" between human agency and social structure (Bhaskar, 1979: 51).

#### Structuralism Must Be Modified To Accommodate Agency As A Meaningful Cognate of Praxis

The two positions which attempt this modification, and which therefore hold the promise of articulating a meaningful concept of praxis and a methodologically viable one, are R. Bhaskar's (1979) "Transformational Model" (i.e. "transformational materialism") and N. Carchedi's (1983) "Class Analysis" (i.e. "Non-reflective materialism"). Their respective methodologies are scientific and are thus amenable to an understanding of sociology as a social science. Furthermore, both are constructed with the expressed purpose of "correcting" the weaknesses in Marx's historical materialist thesis. Both are therefore directed toward an emancipatory, rather than a purely theoretical, end. Most important, neither would, if realized as the theoretical basis for social action programming, reflect in social practice (s): 1. the "scientistic" attitude of "positivism"; 2. the "empathic" sentiment of interpretist/subjectivist methodologies; 3. the moralizing "authority" of traditional or "Marxist" normative/-ethical theory; nor, 4. the laissez-faire attitude of "discourse" analysis.

The obvious next step would be to provide an in-depth analysis of Bhaskar's and Carchedi's positions, and to substantiate my claim that their respective positions provide the theoretical structures wherein a correct conception of human praxis may be established. This task, however, is reserved for subsequent work and goes beyond the limited aim of arguing for a correct starting point for a sociological praxis.

I have argued that traditional conceptions of praxis are, in and for themselves, inadequate as expressions of truly emancipatory action - their meaningful content is insufficient and inappropriate. The respective theoretical structures of the praxes are untenable (because they are inappropriate) for the purpose of providing the constitutive assumptions of a praxis sociology. Taking both of these limitations into account, it can be concluded that traditional or established praxis thinking/theorizing can not provide a way in which to establish a praxis sociology - leastwise one which expresses a sufficient understanding of praxis as an emancipatory action.

If a praxis sociology is possible, then it must be sought in evolving understandings of praxis, and for the reasons that I have argued throughout this thesis, it must be sought in the parameters of an evolving Marxist science. I have identified two possible positions within which to pursue this understanding (see, Appendix C-1 and C-2 for an outline and comparison of their respective theoretical structures as compared with the rejected "praxis" positions).

### Conclusion

The foregoing review and critique of theoretical praxis can be summarized by underscoring three choices that a potential praxis sociology need consider:

1. It is better to know praxis as an abstract, illusionary and "passive" metaphor for political participation (as in "praxis"-1) than to mistakenly

believe the illusion that philosophy (its normative tenets) can become active through guiding (and thus legitimizing) "praxis" theorists' intervention into the real world of social action (as in "praxis"-3).

2. A traditional philosophical understanding can be legitimately challenged by "praxis" understood within a normative theory of efficiency (as in Habermas's "praxis") and a viable praxis sociology can form around this understanding, provided that one is willing to consign praxis to a functionalist paradigm.

3. Philosophical notions of praxis can be challenged and a functionalist sociological framework for praxis rejected if one is willing to accept that a Marxist scientific concept of praxis can evolve through further theoretical interventions and refinements of its theoretical structure.

Clearly, it is the third choice which this thesis supports. In doing so, the thesis does not so much support a unified position, as it does a shared vision of praxis: one which is, as yet, obscured by the underdeveloped theoretical structure of a Marxist science.

A primary assertion of this thesis is that a Marxist science must (and will) provide the authority for sociologists' active intervention into the social world as praxis sociologists. However, before the precise nature of this intervention can be articulated, and practical procedures for this intervention stated, a developed notion of agency must be wrought from the theoretical structure of Marxist science. To do otherwise - to proceed without recognizing that this effort is not yet accomplished - is to ignore the caution that this thesis urges and to repeat the errors of praxis theorizing that this thesis has pointed out. Predicated on the success (or failure) of this effort will be decided the question of whether or not praxis sociologists are able to participate in the process of praxis without manipulating it to an end other than that of human freedom, and universal justice.

## APPENDIX A

DEFINITION OF TERMS

"Ontological", "epistemological" and "axiological" refer to the component parts of a philosophical or theoretical structure that attempt to answer three types of questions: "what is there"; "how do we know what there is"; and, "what ought there to be", respectively (Marcovic, 1974). Morgan (1983) suggests that, within the structure of sociological theory and method, these components may be taken as the sociologist's chosen "modes of engaging" the social world. By "systematically decoding" them, one may arrive at why different premises "favor" distinctive kinds of sociological practices and how strategies for engaging the social world may be "implemented in practice". Within this framework of analysis one may, through identifying the sociologist's premises (or constitutive assumptions), be able to identify the "basic paradigm that serves as the foundation for inquiry" (20-21).

Ontology: the answer the theorist/philosopher provides in response to the question of "what is there?" (Marcovic, 1974: 9); more specifically, his/her view of the social world. Essentially the first premise of social/political theorizing, this view is stated in specific postulates about the nature of human nature, leading to subsequent claims about the nature of the social world, and the existence/non-existence of "laws" or forces which shape, govern and/or regulate individual behavior/social processes.

Epistemology: the answer the theorist/philosopher provides in response to the question of "how do we know what there is" (Ibid: 9). It includes claims about the origin(s) of knowledge (expressed as materialism or idealism), its nature (expressed as "subjective"/"spiritualistic", "idealistic", "mechanistic", or "dialectic"), its limits (expressed as "objective" or "subjective"), its relationship to the social actor (expressed as "active" or "passive", "conscious" or "unconscious"), and its relationship to the informed observer (expressed as "pragmatist", "empiricist", "realist", or "rationalist"); or as Morgan (1983) states it, "Images of a social phenomena usually expressed in terms of a favored metaphor".

Axiology: the answer the theorist/ philosopher provides in response to the question of "what ought there to be" (Marcovic, 1967: 9), more specifically, how the social world (inclusive of the recognition of the individual social actor) ought to be structured, and whether the "normative" dimensions of human life (i.e. moral/ethical/aesthetic/religious ought to be structured on "a posteriori" or "a priori" principles within either epistemological or ontological premises.

## APPENDIX B

DESCRIPTION OF newSTART PROJECT

newSTART opened its doors on January 26, 1986 as a Job Placement Service run by "ex-cons" for "ex-cons". My involvement with the project began in August of 1986 and continued through to its closure on April 4 1988. Originally hired as a Job Placement Fieldworker, I held a number of positions within the project including that of Project Director. The following is a brief description of the project, organized according to its various functions, aspects, etc. As a supplement to this description, I have attached a copy of the project's "flyer".

newSTART's Origins

newSTART was originally modeled on the HELP program, a job finding service started in Kingston, Ontario by a parolee from Collins Bay Penitentiary. Upon moving to Vancouver, and with the administrative help of an SFU Prison Education Program instructor (and "seed" money from anonymous donors), he established newSTART at 1788 Kingsway Avenue, Vancouver. Shortly thereafter, he "handed" over the management of the project to a former fellow prisoner of Collins Bay.

THE BOARD

newSTART's board, the Vancouver Eastside Educational Enrichment Society, was comprised of two members who were active in SFU's Prison Education Program and one who, at the time, was the director of the Carnegie Centre. Self-described as having "a wide scope of experience in dealing with convicts and ex-convicts", the board (save one active member) was a "paper" one. Initially there was a lot of discontent with this situation. The board, it was thought (by newSTART's staff), should take an active role in fundraising and an active interest in the project as a whole. But as the project grew, this non-participation was generally accepted as preferable as it allowed the project to move in the directions it saw fit. Further, it was seen as one less obstacle to be negotiated on newSTART's road to eventual autonomy.

THE PERSONNEL

newSTART's general policy was to hire "ex-offenders" and family members of "ex-offenders". Federal ex-prisoners were deemed preferable to Provincial ones and all applicants were required to "have their lives in order" (i.e. not "active", nor strung out on booze or drugs). Other informal policies and hiring procedures (that were in place at one time or another) were as follows: although those "ex-cons" with "morals beefs" could register as clients, they could not participate as employees nor volunteers; applicants were "screened" for "solidness" (then checked through the grapevine); "pro-con" was judged to be an asset to the project as it served to draw others to the program; applicants with "too much education" were seen as a threat to the "family" atmosphere of the project ("we'll get too bureaucratized"); women were discouraged from fieldwork and were subsequently channeled into clerical duties.

A newSTART employee could be fired for any breach of confidentiality or dishonesty or any regression from an "ordered life". During the first year of operation three employees were fired for various offences.

The personnel policies changed over the last year of the project's existence. With more funding and more projects underway, newSTART encountered difficulties when it came to finding qualified personnel. When hiring, ex-prisoners were still given preference, but with the ever present fear that the project would go under unless it "grew-up", the employees had to have other qualifications. The employee breakdown in the concluding months was as follows: (regarding "criminal profile") 3 Drug Traffickers, 2 Lifers, 2 Armed Robbers, 1 Thief, and 2 non-offenders; (regarding education) 6 University Degrees, 2 GED, 2 with some high school. There were 3 females and 7 males and the average age was 33 yrs.

### THE CLIENTS

All clients who used newSTART's services were guaranteed confidentiality and honesty and were accepted as clients on the basis that they came to the program of their own volition. Initially, clients came vis-a-vis "word of mouth" and from institutions which the staff had visited. Eventually these visits were stopped because of allegations that a newSTART employee was smuggling drugs into one of the local prisons. One of the reasons for hiring non-offenders was to alleviate this problem). At the mid point in the program's development, clients referred to the program by agencies out-numbered casual "drop-ins".

It was newSTART's policy not to give out any information on a client. For the most part this was accepted. Initially the program would respond to the question of whether or not an individual was registered with the program but as the number of juvenile clients increased (through a steady stream of "clients" from the B. C. Borstal Association and the Pacific Legal Education sponsored DARE program) the practice changed to not answering that question for the reason that a registrant, by virtue of his/her registration, more than likely had a record. Answering the question would therefore amount to indicting an individual as to his/her "criminality". This was a sensitive area particularly with juvenile clients.

Juvenile clients presented the most problems for the program. For example, although DARE professed a "big brother/sister" attitude, the fact that the juvenile was involved with the DARE program meant that the court had ordered it (DARE was contracting with provincial corrections). newSTART attempted to distance itself in any way whatsoever from any mandate that was seen to include aspects of an "enforcement" philosophy. After a number of discussions with the Director of DARE, it was agreed that all potential DARE referrals would be seen in private (i.e. away from their "big brother" or "big sister") and "screened" (and assessed on an individual basis) as to their willingness to register and participate in the program.

### THE SERVICES

newSTART was best known by the community at large for its employment service. By all objective measures it was a success. The service was applauded for the number of people it placed into jobs and the way in which it found the job opportunities. Despite this "success", most of the staff conceded the service to be a failure. Many of the jobs were "low end no-where jobs". If they were not low paying, they were more often than not the dirty



jobs which most persons avoided (demolition, janitorial, fish/tanning factory work etc.). There were exceptions of course but not enough to alleviate the dissatisfaction that the staff felt with this service. Occasionally newSTART's clients would "screw up". For example, two clients were placed at a demolition outfit. The pay was good (\$10-\$13/hr) but the work was hard. A week or so later the employer phoned to say the two did not show up and that he was missing a set of cutting torches. He had no proof it was a newSTART client. However, a week later two former newSTART clients were arrested for attempting to cut into a shop's cash box. Another example is that of the juvenile client who stole the petty cash from an employer.

newSTART's relationship with unions (and to the idea of "unions" in general) was another problem that arose out of the employment service. Should newSTART supply "labour" to non-union shops; should newSTART knowingly supply "scab labor"; or, should newSTART remain "neutral" vis-a-vis these questions. These were the type of problems that were never resolved.

The education service which had initially been a "paper" service had been slowly evolving into a viable program subsequent to attaining adequate funding. However, the programs were plagued with organizational problems and were, in the final analysis, inadequate relative to the other programs available to newSTART's clients.

# new**START**

is a community based  
non-profit project providing  
**ADVOCACY, EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**  
for ex-offenders and others in conflict with the law.

## **TO THE EMPLOYER WE OFFER:**

- no cost service - we save you time and money
- pre-screening of clients
- quick job filling process for casual, part/time and full/time positions
- post placement follow up
- confidentiality
- more than 2 years of proven success

## **TO THE COMMUNITY WE OFFER:**

- an accessible resource
- informational meetings and speaking engagements at institutions, schools, community centres and group homes
- the chance to help individuals keep off the streets
- encouragement and support for individuals to become responsible and productive members of the community

## **TO THE CLIENT WE OFFER:**

- no cost service
- job placement
- counselling/advocacy
- tutoring/education upgrading
- resume preparation
- job skills training
- community referrals
- confidentiality
- an open door policy

## **new START'S OBJECTIVES:**

- to prepare clients for employment
- to lessen dependence on social assistance by providing employment opportunities
- to assist in the recovery from drug and alcohol dependence
- to enrich our client's lives through education programs and employment opportunities

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## **WE NEED YOUR HELP TO BE A SUCCESS - PLEASE SUPPORT THE newSTART PROGRAM BY:**

- providing jobs
- volunteering as a tutor or other office help
- referring potential clients
- making a tax deductible donation (a receipt will be issued)

## APPENDIX C-1

FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTIVE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PRAXISESPraxis-1: TRADITIONAL PHILOSOPHICAL PRAXIS (H. Arendt)

Praxis is a metaphor which expresses the quintessential property of human existence as manifested by skilled and "free" (i.e. those free of the constraints of laboring activities) orators' political participation in a democratized process of speech and deeds, as guided by the operative "norms" of debate and persuasion. Its aim is to defeat theoretically informed political systems (particularly Marxist) by encouraging participation in the democratic process: one which is assumed to be informed by universal ethics, not social theory. A subsidiary aim is to denude the social sciences of their normative content by re-affirming praxis as a question of, and for, political philosophy.

Praxis-2: "MARXIST" PHILOSOPHICAL PRAXIS - CRITICAL HUMANISM (M. Marcovic, et.al.)

Praxis is the empirical realization of the potential sociability of individuals (a "Marxist" ethos) which is optimized by their participation in a democratized system of self-management. The potential for praxis remains otherwise trapped (as a latent potential) by structural/historical forces that impose their own set of operative dispositions - egoism and self-interest - on the social actor. Its aim is to "optimize" the potential sociability of human beings through theoretical intervention (by "praxis theorists") into the social world for the purpose of articulating (for the social actor) the structural constraints on his/her potential as a being of "praxis". Thereafter, the "praxis theorist" acts as moral philosopher by guiding the social actor on a course of action which expresses "Marxist" ethical norms. A no less important aim is to defeat historicist and scientistic social theory (specifically a Marxist science) through emphasizing the efficacious nature of human agency, and proving this "fact" in the practice of democratic self-management.

Praxis-3: MARXIST SCIENTIFIC PRAXIS (Lenin, Engels, et.al.)

Praxis is an economic concept synonymous with productive labor. Accordingly, it draws into focus (and therefore encompasses as its meaningful content) the relations and forces of production as the determinate factors of society's economic foundation and "legal" and "political" super-structure. It is, therefore, the determinant variable - the fundamental economic category - within Marx's scientific methodology which leads to the deduction of the "laws of motion of modern society". Its aim is to establish a scientific understanding of society; one which expresses the science of society as a science of, and for, the proletariat. A consequential aim is to defeat philosophical (i.e. idealist) and "bourgeois" scientific (i.e. traditional positivist - empirical/analytic) explanations. Because praxis is accountable to "laws" inherent in the material processes of society [it expresses the "truths" inherent in the economic structure (i.e. ontological "truths")] it is incommensurable with praxis-2, which is accountable to "norms" and which expresses the efficacy of human agency.

Praxis-4: PRAXIS AS DISCOURSE (J. Habermas)

Praxis is a cognate of human consciousness; specifically, language as manifest in the "action" of dialogue. It is realized when questions of human practical interests, as opposed to those of rational scientific interests, are decided consensually within a dialogical forum open to all men/women. Consequently, these two "cognitive interests" - the normative and the scientific - have a theoretical basis for stating their distinctiveness and incommensurability. Its aim is, then, to provide a theoretical basis (a theory of knowledge) for distinguishing the predominate cognitive interests which remain otherwise distorted in our modern age. A subsidiary aim is to defeat unilateral normative/philosophical and rational/scientific explanations of meaningful social action (i.e. praxis). The fundamental concern of this praxis - the intrusion of scientific knowledge into the ethical/moral domain of existence - is shared with praxis-1. Praxis-1, however, argues that the correct domain of moral/ethical questions is that of an archaic and elitist mode of "political association", whereas praxis-2 argues that "common association" is the correct arena for such dialogue. On the basis of this fundamental divergence, these two praxes express incommensurable positions.

Praxis-5: PRAXIS AS CLASS ANALYSIS (N. Carchedi)

Praxis is the revolutionary class action of the proletariat. Couched within a traditional understanding of the dialectical confrontation of "class" (as "carriers of contradictions"), praxis is an economic concept (a determinate variable) and is therefore amenable to scientific explanation. The departure of praxis from the traditional scientific understanding (and the uniqueness of this praxis) is based on the proposition that the "determination" of the social process is explicable by reference to dialectics as a "law of cognition" (rather than an ontological law). Its aim is to support, in principle, the methodology of a Marxist science (as in praxis-3), while at the same time freeing it from its deterministic and teleological trappings. For this reason, its relationship to praxis-3 must be understood as that of theoretical "under-laborer" in the role of clarifying the conceptual distortions in Marx's broader historical materialist thesis. Its most general aim remains the same - to advocate for a science of, and for, the proletariat.

Praxis-6: REALIST PRAXIS (R. Bhaskar)

Praxis is a generic concept expressing the activity of knowledge production, and knowledge production is action whereby individuals "know" their social world by actively confronting its conditions. Praxis moves from being a generic to a specific concept when it is imbued with intentionality and understood relationally to one's "position" vis-a-vis the division of labor. As such, intentionality can be understood relative to the interests of a specific "positional practice", in relation to the conflicting interests (and motivations) of the other "positional practices" located within the division of labor. While this praxis may be considered a more general "value-neutral" (leastwise non-partisan) position - it is a philosophy of science - than is praxis-5, it too has the ability to act as an under-labourer for a Marxist scientific praxis. Its ability to clarify the conceptual distortions of a Marxist science which prevent a notion of agency from expressing itself has been demonstrated. However, its individualistic and psychologistic tendencies - its appropriateness to a neo-Weberian analysis - suggest that it is incommensurable with praxis-5, and questionable as to its commensurability with a Marxist science (i.e. praxis-3). As a developing position, this remains to be determined.

PRAXIS TYPE	THEORETICAL STRUCTURE	CONSTITUTIVE ASSUMPTIONS		
		ONTOLOGY (WHAT IS THERE?) [IDEALISM]	EPISTEMOLOGY (HOW DO WE KNOW...) [RATIONALISM]	AXIOLOGY (WHAT OUGHT THERE TO BE?) [ARCHAIC MORAL/POLITICAL PHIL.]
PRAXIS-1 TRADITIONAL PHIL. CONCEPT (Arendt)	Non-dialectical dualism: labor & praxis as two distinct dimensions of human existence. The error of not distinguishing <u>PRAXIS</u> these dimensions, results in confusing necessity with freedom, making (pro- ducing) with acting, and scientific knowledge with normative/political knowledge (i.e. the "scientization of politics").	idealism: praxis as novelty; as a manifestation of man's unknow- able potential; as a normative theory of human nature. The ob- ject domain of political phil. i.e. the phil. of/for praxis.  <u>"UNBRIDGEABLE GAP": 2 activities of life</u> <u>ontological materialism</u> : labor as cyclical, mundane, and therefore ahistorical necessity; a 'mean- ingless' manifestation of man's actuality. The object domain of social science, i.e. the science of non-praxis; of "animal laboran"	....what there should be?: a question of/for rationalism/epist. <u>idealism</u> (i.e. normative knowledge) "reason guided by common sense" Praxis can not be predicted (it has no empirical base)  <u>2 dimensions of knowledge</u> ...what there is?: a question of/ for empiricism (i.e. scientific knowledge). A question directed at the empirically evident realm of making, i.e. the realm of labor understood as necessity.	the "polis" as a metaphor for political participation. The theory of pluralism: princi- ples of participatory democ- racy; debate and persuasion guided by "universal" ethics.  <u>2 domains of inquiry</u> Not a question for science because "truth is an invitation to tyranny".
PRAXIS-2 "MARXIST" PHIL. CONCEPT (CRITICAL HUMANIST) (Marcovic et. al.)	Dialectically "reconciled" dualism: <u>Dialectic as epistemological method</u> Posed as question of method, i.e., as a Critical Humanist Philosophy, praxis emphasizes "human creation of possibilities and relative human freedom in choosing among possible alternatives. Ideal is taken as the optimal real possibility of an essentially open historical process".	[IDEALISM] ACTUALITY (What man appears to be) Empirical being: supported by factual evidence via scientific method: a descriptive notion. Historical being: man is a historically conditioned individual; he is what he appears to be because of the historical process. <u>ONT. DISTINCTION OF CRIT./HUM. METHOD</u> POTENTIALITY (what man is able to be); a normative view of human nature. Man's latent disposition(s) is blocked by external/objective forces. However, latent dispositions are presumed to be "actual", therefore idealism is tempered by a quasi- empirical idea of human potentiality.	[DIALECTICAL HUMANISM] ...what there is?: a methodolog- ical synthesis of positivism and subjectivism to reveal the structural and interpretive (i.e. meaning) constraints on "human creation" of the world, and, to determine whether or not, latent potentials (assumed to be empirical) can become manifest. This synthesis forms the basis of the dialectic/humanist method Knowledge of "what there is", therefore, leads to the question of "what is possible". Knowledge of the social totality encom- passes, therefore, a radical critique of existing conditions as a "pre-condition for radical change".	["MARXIST" THEORY OF ETHICS] Democratic self-management organized at various inter- related levels throughout society. This model is con- structed as an "ideal type" wherein the assumed latent potentials of human beings could be "optimized". As an "ideal type" it suggests that "real" programs orga- nized for social change should, more or less, approximate this model. Praxis as non-guided action.

PRAXIS TYPE	THEORETICAL STRUCTURE	CONSTITUTIVE ASSUMPTIONS		
		ONTOLOGY (WHAT IS THERE?) [HISTORICAL MATERIALISM]	EPISTEMOLOGY (HOW DO WE KNOW...) [DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM]	AXIOLOGY (WHAT OUGHT THERE TO BE?) [DETERMINISM]
<u>PRAXIS-3</u> <u>MARXIST</u> <u>SCIENTIFIC</u> <u>CONCEPT</u> (Lenin, Engels, et. al.)	A materialist conception of history: praxis understood within the context of historical materialism: praxis as synonymous with the concept of productive labor; therefore, praxis as the prime variable - that which produces and reproduces social life - within the primary equation of Marxist theorizing directed at "uncovering" what "conditions other features of life". The theoretical structure supports the methodology of political economy; as the basis for class analysis.	Productive labor as that which distinguishes humans from animals. Praxis as synonymous with productive labor. Praxis as a 'mode of existence', i.e. as a descriptive a posteriori category (i.e. empirical); as an economic category; as the central variable responding to the changing modes of production understood within the context of class struggle.	A central problematic question: focuses on the relationship between the economic (infrastructure) and "other" features of life ("superstructure"). This relationship must be understood "dialectically" (vis-a-vis ontologically posed contradictions-determinations) as one between the "rational abstractions" ("laws" of the social process) and "ideology". Dialectic is understood as a condition of knowledge (i.e. for "truth" claims).	An inadequate axiological tenet: lacks a cognates to support a theoretical explanation sufficient to the task of dispelling the deterministic features of Marx's historical materialist thesis, i.e. lacks an adequate concept of human agency. Materialism is predisposed to to a "theory of reflection and presents a mechanistic point of view.
<u>PRAXIS-4</u> <u>PRAXIS</u> <u>AS</u> <u>DISCOURSE</u> (Habermas)	Praxis understood within the context of a normative theory of efficiency Praxis is a dialogical situation whose outcome meets the specific needs of humans practical interests i.e. a moral/ethical community. Praxis is contingent on a rational consensus, and the context specific needs of the problematic within which dialogue takes place. Praxis is the vehicle to arrive at "truth" because truth is contingent on consensus (i.e. on "action" understood as discourse in a situation of "communicative competence").	[TRANSCENDENTAL NATURALISM] <u>Labor process</u> : a significant and fundamental category but not the basis for constructing "possible life worlds". L.P. mediates "objective - subjective nature" (the environment - mind) e.g. man as tool maker signifies "both acting and apprehending the world". Labor, therefore, the fundamental category of <u>existence</u> . Man's <u>genus</u> is historical and evolutionary. <u>Artificial/Analytical distinction</u> : <u>Consciousness</u> , the fundamental category of meaningful existence. It is through consciousness that a man knows his genus as historical (i.e. species being) and it is by reference to consciousness (i.e. in its concrete form: language) that we can both "know" the world and change aspects of it (leastwise "control" it).	[RATIONALISM] 0 <u>Purposive-rational "action"</u> : the objectification of reality according to the "cognitive interests" of knowledge i.e. the technical interests of labor. These interests determine (they are the conditions of) the "aspects" under which reality is "objectified". The cognitive interest of P. R. action-to control reality. Domain of Empir./Anal. science. 2 real "world constituting" actions R <u>Communicative "action"</u> : the objectification of reality according to the practical interest of "community" i.e. a just and good life. The cognitive interest of communicative action is a "moral, ethical one. Domain of hermeneutic "science".	[NORMATIVE THEORY OF EFFICIENCY] Not a question for empirical-analytic science, nor for hermeneutic interpretist perspectives. The distinction between the two has become distorted (within their respective practices). Rather a question for "truths" emerging from "idealized" dialogical situations: R "truths" which are contingent on reaching "rational consensus omnium". "Rationality" being a clear understanding of the means to arrive at predetermined ends; and these "ends" being determined by the "needs" (or "interests") of the specific problematic.

PRAXIS TYPE	THEORETICAL STRUCTURE	CONSTITUTIVE ASSUMPTIONS		
		ONTOLOGY (WHAT IS THERE?) [HISTORICAL MATERIALISM]	EPISTEMOLOGY (HOW DO WE KNOW...) [NON-REFLECTIVE MATERIALISM]	AXIOLOGY (WHAT OUGHT THERE TO BE?) [A QUESTION OF/FOR PRACTICE]
<u>PRAXIS-5</u> <u>PRAXIS</u> <u>AS CLASS</u> <u>ANALYSIS</u> (Carchedi)	Non-reflective Materialism: an attempt to re-construct "the methodological treatise which Marx never wrote by way of posing the centrality of class as the unity of social life and social research". The unity of theory (thinking) and acting is assured by "objectification" as an ontological fact (process) of human existence - "to know something we must deal with it" (i.e. dialectic as a "law of cognition"). The problem is to locate praxis, as revolutionary practice, within a number of "real" possibilities. (i.e. its "relative autonomy" within a number of "determined instances").	Presupposes the existence of material reality and non-material real concrete social relations. Social relations are understood by reference to the division of labor. Classes are understood as economic categories in the sense that they are carriers of contradictions; they are expressions of the contradictions and determinations inherent in the economic structure.	Objectification as a "fact of human existence"- to know something we must "deal with it". (i.e. "transform it"). However, because classes are expressions of the "contradictions" (and determinations) inherent in the economic structure, they are "carriers of antagonistic interpretations"; of "structurally determined conditions of existence". Social "laws" are the expressions of "fundamental contradictions" within the social processes and are therefore subject to change through revolutionary practice.	As classes are expressions (i.e. "carriers") of structural contradictions (i.e. "economic categories"), the question of axiology is replaced by the question of how the "agents" of praxis can "change something of which they are only an expression". Response: agents of praxis (proletariat) create conditions of their own domination (by "introducing new social relations antagonistic to existing ones"); thus creating conditions for the supersession of the old society" and, in the process, changing "itself". Thus praxis is synonymous with "revolutionary practice", and "dialectics" is the basis for understanding "determination" and "agency" as mutually complementary concepts.
<u>PRAXIS-6</u> <u>REALIST</u> <u>CONCEPT</u> (Bhaskar)	Transformational Materialism as supported by a "critical naturalism" (as a phil. of science) praxis is couched within (and re-conceptualized because of) a "qualified anti-positivist naturalism". The ont. and epist. principles of this critical science support the contention that individuals and society possess properties which render them as appropriate "objects" of science. The nature of these properties allow for the equating of praxis with "causal" agency. "Transformative materialism" is formed as the appropriate scientific theoretical structure within which to understand praxis.	Transformational model: society (i.e. structures, practices and conventions) and the individual are theoretical/analytical distinctions; neither is reducible to the other. "Society is a necessary condition for intentional human action" (and vice versa). They are connected in the act of "transformation". Allocation of scarce productive resources creates a div. of labor. In turn, this creates "positional practices" which embody the "conflicts in society- hence, the basis for "interest" motivated structural transformation (premised on the argument of "reasons as sufficient cause").	In response to the historical/materialism's inability to express practice as the connection between thought and the world (between "human cognition and material/social reality"), epist. realism argues that "thought" emerges in the context of appropriate conditions..(and) involves the interaction of persons in the course of their purposeful activity with the conditions which make up the world". Social "laws" are the outcome of social production (the "transitive object domain of knowledge"). They may (or may not) express the "real" independently (objectively) existing properties of the social structure (i.e. the "transitive object domain").	[A QUESTION OF/FOR PRACTICE] Because society is only materially present in "transformative action" (as per. transformative materialism), then praxis (as transformative action) expresses the system as open". The question of axiology is therefore not applicable.

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