

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

RECONCILIATION OR REVOLUTION? BRANDON, HEGEL, AND
MARX

by
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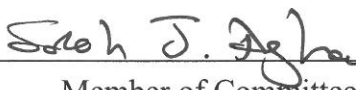
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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This work primarily challenges Robert Brandom's reading of Marx as a local genealogist. This task is done through an examination of Brandom's reading of Hegel in which Brandom classifies the tools available to the modern subject to interrupt and suspect the game of justification. These methodological considerations are intimately linked to the question of Reconciliation and Revolution, in so far that both these notions point to forms of relating to conceptual norms. The argument is that Marx's method, encapsulated by the notion *materialist dialectics*, is irreducible to genealogy. The argument is worked out by implicitly returning to Hegel and focusing on Marx's few remarks about his own method. After the argument is presented, the question of 'Reconciliation and Revolution?' is confronted and answered.

PREFACE

The best start is perhaps to point to the inappropriateness of the beginning. However this should not be read as a retreat but rather as an awareness of the contingency of this very start, that is to the question why our three chosen thinkers would have satisfactory answers. There are no ready-made guidelines for the treatment of Hegel and Marx; their names animate Philosophy, Political Economy, Sociology, Critical Theory and Politics. Discussions about Hegel and Marx are either too general – highlighting, either positively or negatively, their contributions and influence - or too specific - belonging to the exclusive circles of Marxists and Hegelians. Rarely does one engage with Hegel and Marx for a specific distinction or a nuanced contribution, rather the interest is usually in the whole of their works, their context, influence and potential. On the other hand, there is almost no possible way of comprehensively and properly treating all these aspects. “The True is the Whole” says Hegel, yet the same Hegel speaks of the inappropriateness of beginnings. This work has its “eyes” on the Whole, yet it proceeds on a specific set of fronts. The title asks “Reconciliation or Revolution?” and the work expands in each round to capture this dimension. This is not a political work, yet it has a sharp political edge. This political thread is often implicit yet it animates the whole of this work.

Although the interest is in Hegel and Marx, Brandom is the key figure of this work. Brandom advances not in ‘fists fight’ - as Marx would have it - but rather in an act of bridging two long and accomplished philosophical traditions. His intervention reanimates the interconnectedness of Thought and Action and sets the idiom of “theory and practice” at the core of Philosophy. Brandom’s work is rarely political in character, yet the necessarily political

ramifications of his account are explicable and timely. This is not an endorsement of the kind of politics one gets out of Brandom, but is rather a celebration of the explication of the political edge of the subjective and the interconnectedness of the subjective and the objective. To unpack this last declaration, it's not yet another unqualified account of "the personal is political", nor a perspectivist account; rather it is the explication of *how* the subjective is political. Furthermore, it's not a reassertion of the "end of history", the vulgarly objective proclamation repeated perhaps since Hegel and on all fronts, ranging from the Radical Left to the Conservative Right. Rather it articulates the objective aspect of the subjective and the subjective aspect of the objective. In this view, the *political* is enabled beyond both relativism and scientism.¹ Brandom's account sheds light on the impoverishment of the empirical conception of History, on the abstractness of Liberalism and on the defect of unproblematically assuming progress.² Yet his account (whether praised or denounced) is still in the playground of Liberalism, perhaps on the side of its "*ought to be done*", attempting to break with dominant liberal discourses of social contract, negative freedom, and the trap of 'the best of the worst'.

The typical rival to this tradition is the Left, and if Brandom resorts to Hegel to present a sort of Liberal reformist outlook, then typically the Left resorts to Marx, the young Hegelian, for the reassertion of Revolution. This typical gesture is repeated here. However, the repetition does

¹ The relevant distinction here is between the 'political' and 'politics'. Politics is the formalization of the political through a set of mechanisms that set the scope as well as the appropriateness of political practice. To speak of a notion of the 'political' that is irreducible to politics is to attend to the conditions of politics. In other words, through this reduction what is missed is that politics is a *result* rather than an isolated fact about society. The notion 'political' captures the interrelatedness of political action and customs with a wider set of meaningful phenomena. This 'interrelatedness' is ambiguous, it must be worked out. In this work, we're reading the political as relation to what *is*. If Philosophy is its own time grasped in Thought, the political points to the attitude towards this time.

² The first is a commitment to the understanding of History in terms of a set of causal chains. The second is a commitment to universal principles detached from particularities (historical, social, and economic). The third is a commitment to the inevitability of progress. These three commitments could also overlap.

not serve to answer once and for all the question “Reconciliation or Revolution?” but rather to explicate the alternatives. The hope is that the ‘revolutionary reader’ reconsiders Reconciliation as not *tout court* ‘complicit’ with what *is*, and the ‘reconciliatory reader’ to reconsider Revolution as *justifiable*. The opposition of Marx to Brandom’s Hegel (BH) is therefore the absorption of Marx by BH, but only to transform BH. In particular, the Brandomian project could be useful in the articulation of the *Materialist* position; a position that is almost incomprehensible without its political - and thus practical - aspect. Left Hegelians - or Hegelian Marxists - present a rival and a robust *radical* Hegel. However, their reading of Hegel renders Marx’s relation to Hegelianism, and most crucially to the materialist position, ambiguous. Is Marx’s work an elaboration of Hegel’s? Is it an application of Hegelian Dialectics? Are Marx’s philosophical moments always Hegelian moments? And finally, why (or how) sneak in Materialism? Was Hegel a materialist all along? Of course, these rhetorical questions are not challenges; rather they simply help the current work to put an emphasis on the formulation of what a materialist position *could* be.

Once explicated, the mismatch - the shortcomings in Brandom’s reading of Marx - is productive. The simplest yet perhaps most crucial task of this work is understanding *why* Brandom reads Marx this way (assuming the mismatch). Is it a bias? A misreading of Hegel? A misreading of Marx?

Lastly, we must ask: Why the *political*? Is the *political* the starting point from which arise philosophical considerations that eventually lead to political battles *inside* philosophy? Or is it the other way round, namely, is it philosophical considerations that necessarily have political ramifications? These two options picture the political realm and the philosophical realm as

ultimately separate and externally related. Yet, there is a competing view. This view does not decouple the two realms, yet it does not try to subsume one under the other under banners such as the *philosophical is political*³ or the *political is philosophical*.⁴ Rather, it sees them as threatening, provoking and ultimately altering each other. These personified relations certainly must be unpacked, but to posit an opposition, or even a distinction on this general level presupposes working out - articulating, unfolding - the moments of each. There is no better place to start but the disjunction between *Hegel the Philosopher* and *Marx the Theorist*. The animating idea of this work is that no crude opposition can be made, a claim that relies on the endless continuities and discontinuities elaborated between the two figures, and as such between the two realms. The *political* is therefore relevant *for Philosophy from within Philosophy*; it is not merely a purpose nor a competing realm but rather a symptom of the *incompleteness* of Philosophy, a *gap* that is either revealed and as such celebrated by the *revolutionary* or sutured and as such normalized by the *reconciliatory*. This disjunction is the pulse of this work.

Since Modernity, understood here as a normative philosophical category, the question of ‘what is to be done?’ has become central. Modernity subverted ‘the rule of norms’. Yet, norms are the only resource upon which an *ought* can be carried. What is to be done is necessarily done according to certain norms. Yet this attitude towards norms is too broad, it only eliminates the total rejection of norms. The relation to norms must be explicated. ‘Reconciliation’ and

³ Such assertion can be found for instance in the works of Louis Althusser where Philosophy is taken as “class struggle in theory”.

⁴ Perhaps this is a presupposition of what is known as ‘Political philosophy’. It provides philosophical answers to political questions by assuming the questions *as* philosophical. For instance, forms of governance or forms of distribution are philosophically elaborated based on rational, moral or practical grounds. ‘Political questions’ are taken as given. This attitude is exemplary in the works of John Rawls for instance.

‘Revolution’ are two stances that articulate and answer the question ‘What is to be done?’; each presupposes a certain relation to norms. The need for this question is two-fold. On the one hand, it is the dissatisfaction with norms, with what *is*, and an awareness that this dissatisfaction holds within it a potential to subvert what *is*. Classically, Revolution is depicted as the radical - usually violent - overturning of the ruling order. On the other hand, Reconciliation is depicted as a compromise, or on a better account, as a realist demand for resolution. Revolution is paradoxically idealistic and barbaric, Reconciliation is realistic and pragmatic. At the core of the story told here is the rejection of both depictions. Following the articulation of the relation to norms reveals both stances as heavily theoretical, and a commitment to each reveals a whole set of other normative commitments, both philosophical and political.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. Brief Exposition

To begin with, in the crudest sense, we are dealing with Pragmatism, Idealism and Materialism. The key figures corresponding to each are respectively Brandom, Hegel and Marx. Brandom is the figure of Reconciliation, Marx is the figure of Revolution and Hegel is Hegel, read as either or, both or perhaps neither. Interestingly however, neither Marx's account nor Brandom's is conceivable without Hegel. In this sense, a certain engagement with Hegel posits itself as necessary when dealing with both Brandom and Marx.

What facilitates this engagement is Brandom's development of a reading of Hegel in which Marx and other 'unmaskers' could be situated. Moreover, Brandom reads Hegel as the philosopher who preemptively dealt with suspicions raised by his successors, particularly those who developed what Brandom calls *global genealogies*, that is, genealogies that attempt to *explain* the whole conceptual apparatus (i.e. the realm of reasons in which we give and ask reasons for our commitments and actions) in terms of underlying irrational "causes" (e.g. *will to power*). In other words, these genealogies undermine the *justificatory potential* of any reason. In short, they undermine justification as such. Crucially, Brandom distinguishes between two variants of genealogy: local and global. A local genealogy is an explanation that focus on the content of *certain* normative attitudes, and as such breaks the relation between a limited set of content and a limited set of acts. Brandom considers Hegel to have already neutralized global genealogies by revealing their incoherence, and moreover to have already incorporated the method of genealogy as part of the tools necessary to the modern subject. This permissible - and in fact needed -genealogy is local. Brandom develops the condition for conducting a genealogy

as the *exhaustion of justification*. In other words, only when no reason can be given to a certain act (which entails a discrepancy between act and content) that a genealogy is conducted. The mastery of the appropriate applications of justification and genealogy is found in what Brandom considers to be the *post-modern heroic* subject. In the post-modern structure, members of the community, while primarily engage in the game of giving and asking for reasons, recognize that the game is not perfect. In fact, this *imperfection* is what allowed the modern subject to *distance* himself/herself from conceptual content, now considered as *normative* as opposed to *natural*. In simple terms, the modern subject understands that *we* are the creators of norms (this is exactly what leads to suspicion for if norms are no longer natural, they might as well lack any kind of objectivity). Therefore, the imperfection of the game legitimizes a local genealogy, moreover, members of this post-modern community given their awareness of this imperfection assume a reconciliatory attitude: when an actor fails to justify his/her act, the actor (the judged) must *confess* (namely confess that he/she did not act *upon* his/her commitments) to which the judge must reciprocate the confession by admitting that he/she is prone to this slip). This first exchange opens the way for *forgiveness*, understood by Brandom as the retrospective transformation of *contingency* to normative *necessity*. In other words, a new narration is developed where the slip is taken as necessary.

In the picture that Brandom presents, Marx as theorist would reside as either a local or global genealogist. The main focus in the second part of the thesis is to articulate Marx's methodology which we argue is *irreducible* to a genealogy. In other words, the argument is that Marx's suspicion does not translate into a one-way explanation whereby conceptual content is understood through its causal constitution. To develop this reading, we rely on a distinction

between the *conceptual* and the *non-conceptual*. To briefly expose both the need and the usefulness of the distinction, we could say the following: Both Marx and Brandom, both directly and indirectly are inheritors of the tradition of German Idealists. Crucial for the German Idealists (specifically in this work Kant and Hegel), is the task of the self-grounding of Reason. Both Kant and Hegel attempted to escape the metaphysical grounding of Reason which would translate in the *substantialization* of certain categories (e.g. God, Experience...) to safeguard notions of Truth and Objectivity. In Brandom's useful reading, he understand this transformation as a shift from a *representationalist paradigm* to an *expressionist paradigm*. The deadlock of representationalism is resolved by giving priority to expression where the essential expressive unit is *judgment*. In this new understanding, the relation between *thought* and *reality* is no longer understood as a relation between the *conceptual* and the *non-conceptual*. Rather (and this the Hegelian move), *reality* is subsumed under the conceptual. However, this Idealist account must guard against slipping in a form of crude idealism. The *movement of the notion* in Hegel and the *making explicit* in Brandom are these accounts that guarantee a relation between the *ideal* and the *real*. As an inheritor of this tradition, Marx also has his own conception of this relation. If Marx follows the insights of the *idealists*, then the non-conceptual is no longer external to the conceptual, the non-conceptual is *within* the conceptual. This last assertion could be read as the attempt at reading Marx as neither *empiricist*, nor *metaphysician*, nor *local genealogist*. For this task, we rely both Hegel and Kant. For if Hegel is the ultimate dialectician, Kant is the thinker of *conditions*. Based on Marx's insistence on the *materialist* character of his dialectics, we elaborate Marx's materialism as the insistence of the *conditioning of the conceptual by the non-conceptual*.

The tension between Brandom and Marx is therefore read in terms of their different construals of the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual, and subsequently the question of reconciliation and revolution is addressed.

B. Structural Outline

Before we begin, we lay down the structure of the work:

Chapter II is an attempt at articulating BH's project in a manner that reveals distinctions that would be useful to use in the following chapters in order to articulate the antagonism between BH and Marx. In this sense, Chapter II should not be treated as merely an exposition, for the focus is dependent on what we see as relevant to the whole study.

Chapter III should be treated as a hinge between the second and the fourth chapter. In this chapter the transition from BH to Marx is conducted by implicitly returning to Hegel, a return we conduct through an articulation of the relation between the conceptual and non-conceptual. Chapter III begins with a doubt towards BH's project, a doubt that is amplified through our articulation of the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual which we argue is not properly articulated and as such determined by BH. This lack of articulation justifies another reading of Marx, a reading that might not fit Marx (understood as operating not in conformity with philosophy) in neither of the categories that BH suggests.

Chapter IV holds both 1) the alternative reading that we are suggesting of Marx's method, which relies on the philosophical elaborations in Chapter III, and 2) the accentuation of the tension we see between BH and Marx. As we read it, elaborating Marx's method contributes to philosophy, a contribution that might present a challenge to the Brandomian project, not simply

in terms of his reading of Marx, but rather as a challenge to the philosophical project itself: a challenge to the inferential theory of concept formation, which lies at the core of the Brandomian project. While this challenge does not prompt a rejection of BH or for that matter Brandom's work, yet it undermines its political ramifications. Since Marx first and foremost engaged with philosophy with his eyes on "what is to be done?", the suggestion is that Marx is theoretically grounded, a grounding that he needs in order to assert Revolution as that which is to be done.

Lastly, the thesis concludes by articulating and accentuating the tension between reconciliation and revolution, a distinction that finds a resonant restatement in the tension between philosophy and its other, whether this 'other' is understood as 'the political', 'science', 'theory' or otherwise. In other words, the tension between reconciliation and revolution points to a challenge to philosophy itself, a challenge that far from rejecting philosophy (at least in our reading) aims at *revolutionizing* Philosophy, an event that philosophy has encountered before and *must* always commit to.

CHAPTER II: BRANDOM, PHILOSOPHY AND ITS OTHER

A. Interpretation: Hegel and Brandom's Hegel

1. *Brandom's Project*

Brandom's philosophical project is famously characterized by the notion of *inferentialism*. The special focus on inference versus the traditional focus on reference, and the demarcation of inferences under material and formal variants comes from the work of Wilfrid Sellars. Sellars follows Wittgenstein's inversion of the relation between *meaning* and *use*, while maintaining a naturalistic standpoint. Understanding *meaning* in terms of *use* shifts the focus of philosophy from a theory about meaning to a theory about what we do, or put differently, understanding *knowing-that* in terms of *knowing-how*. This project does not attempt to deflate meaning, rather it attempts to *join* normativity, understood as the constellation of all conceptual content that is rule-governed, with a *scientific image of man*.⁵ The thesis of normativity as well as the focus on material inferences implied through explicating what we do marks the point of departure for the Brandomian project. While Sellars attempted to naturalize Kant, Brandom holds to the Hegelian critique of Kant.

The question of what we do as opposed to the possibility of doing marks the difference between Brandom and Marx on the one hand, and Kant on the other. For Brandom, what is characteristic of a community of sapient beings is its members' engagement in the game of

⁵ Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man," in *Science, Perception and Reality* (Atascadero, California: Ridgeview Publishing Company, 1991).

giving and asking for reasons⁶, which is a privileged form of *doing* in the Brandomian project because it captures what it is to be a sapient rather than a merely sentient being, where the latter is characterized by Reliable Differential Responsive Dispositions (RDRDs).⁷ By making explicit what is implicit in this game, Brandom produces a set of normative vocabularies (commitment, responsibility, entitlement, et al). What Brandom answers with this set of normative vocabularies is the question of what we do when we play the game of giving and asking for reasons.

2. *Whose Hegel?*

Before delving into the Brandomian reading of Hegel, it is important to keep in mind the ‘fight over Hegel’. Hegel has found followers from opposite poles of the political spectrum; moreover he has been regarded both as the last metaphysician and the first atheist.⁸ Given all this, it is no wonder that Brandom’s reading of Hegel is one of many competing and sometimes starkly different readings. While it is crucial for Brandom to assert a non-metaphysical reading of Hegel—a reading that takes Hegel to be a post-Kantian philosopher as opposed to a pre-Critical metaphysician—opponents of this reading are not only those who embrace the metaphysical

⁶ The concept of a ‘language game’ comes from the work of Wittgenstein, see *Philosophical Investigations*. However crucially, in Wittgenstein there is no *hierarchy* of language games, whether understood logically or empirically, this is expressed when he says “language has no downtown”. In contrast, Brandom, following Sellars, investigates what are the minimal discursive practices that a speaker needs to be a speaker at all. In this reading, the game of giving and asking for reasons is privileged (the downtown of language) in that in order to be a speaker - to belong to a community of actors and speakers - one must be able to engage in this game.

⁷ Robert Brandom, *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 26.

⁸ In the last footnote to his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Kojève writes: “God and the afterlife have always been denied by certain men. But Hegel was the first to try to formulate a complete philosophy that is atheistic and finitist in relation to Man”. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. James. H. Nichols. (New York: Cornell University Press), 259.

Hegel but also others who find in the Brandomian reading a deflation of what they take to be most radical in Hegel. According to one objection, Brandom is ‘normalizing’ Hegel,⁹ in another reading, he is extrapolating from one shape of consciousness to encompass the whole of consciousness.¹⁰ There are even those who claim that Brandom misunderstands both ‘phenomenology’ and ‘dialectics’, the core of Hegel’s thinking as such.¹¹ However, most of these critiques don’t consider Brandom’s reading to be *ultimately* wrong; rather they claim that Brandom presents a partial Hegel, or that he has a partial understanding of the Absolute Idealist.

In this work we are not contrasting the different readings of Hegel and as a result explicitly entering the ‘fight over Hegel’; rather we are critically engaging with the most famous Hegelian who claimed to have “turned Hegel on his head” and to have broken with Hegelianism as such: Marx. In principle, if Brandom is a Hegelian, then a classical Marxist attempt would be to “turn Brandom on his Head”; in fact however things are not so simple. Marx’s materialism is allegedly a break with Hegel’s idealism, yet many thinkers found in the most ‘mature’ Marxist work (i.e. *Capital*) the expression of a rigorous Hegelian System.¹² The continuities and discontinuities between Marx and Hegel are therefore not easily traced, nor does the contrast between ‘materialism’ and ‘idealism’ seem to be of much help. With regard to the last point, Brandom’s pragmatism is in many ways an attempt to overcome the duality, leaving both

⁹ Slavoj Žižek, “In Defense of Hegel’s Madness,” in *Filozofija I Društvo* 26, no. 4 (2015): 785-812.

¹⁰ Robert Pippin, “Brandom on Hegel on Negation”. Available online at <http://home.uchicago.edu/~rbp1/publications.shtml>

¹¹ Stephen Houlgate, “Phenomenology and *De Re* Interpretation: A Critique of Brandom’s Reading of Hegel,” in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17, no. 1 (2009): 29-47.

¹² The Neue Marx-Lektüre in Germany (Helmut Reichelt, Hans-Georg Backhaus, Michael Heinrich), also known as ‘Value Theory’; and Chris Arthur in the Anglophone world.

idealists and materialists dissatisfied. These aforementioned difficulties are meant to elucidate an important ‘tactical’ point, viz., that any reading of Marx’s relation to Hegel is elaborated on the basis of a certain construal of Hegel.

3. The Materialist vs The Pragmatist

Against this background, the unfolding of Marx’s methodology could serve multiple purposes. First, the most explicit, is the analysis and therefore the assessment of a reading of Marx as a local genealogist. Second, it is the attempt to explicate using Brandomian conceptual tools Marx’s contribution to philosophy when Marx scarcely writes about his method. Third, the explication turns to making sense of the ‘materialist’ standpoint, and situating it vis-a-vis what could be regarded as an opposite position, namely Idealism, with phenomenology as its subjectivist variant. Fourth, this last elaboration could inform the ‘fight over Hegel’. If Marx is read as Hegelian, it becomes hard to see the relevance of the ‘materialist question’. In other words, if the ‘good’ Marx is a ‘good’ Hegelian, what is left of the materialist standpoint but the residue, that is, the ‘bad’ Marx? On the other hand, the Brandomian reading is pragmatic and holistic; it must accommodate Marx within this schema. Construing Marx as a local genealogist is very helpful in that sense, for the assessment of this construal can help in construing the materialist Marx and as such elucidate the discontinuities between Hegel and Marx.¹³

¹³ The focus on ‘causes’ is the primary hint in understanding the tension between idealism and materialism. In that sense, reading Marx as a local genealogist is a construction of how Marx uses causes in order to elaborate his explanation of social reality. Although, the argument of this thesis rejects reading Marx as a genealogist, it nevertheless benefits from Brandom’s elaboration of the explanatory resources available to the modern thinker: Justification and genealogy, a conception that relies on a modern distinction between reasons and causes.

It is left to say that the assessment of Brandom's reading of Marx could help in assessing his semantic reading of Hegel; therefore an important dimension of this work is to contribute to the assessment of Brandom's Hegel through the assessment of BH's Marx.

4. Whose Marx?

To understand which Marx we are dealing with, it is useful to invoke Brandom's distinction between *de re* interpretation and *de dicto* interpretation. While the first interpretation focuses on what the author *ought* to commit to, the second interpretation focuses on what the author *actually* committed to. According to Brandom both interpretations are legitimate, the choice is then dependent on the interest of the interpreter. We can think of the *de dicto* interpretation as appropriate for a scholarly work, whereas the *de re* interpretation as appropriate for a philosophical work. The distinction although useful is far from settling the issue, for it is clear that an understanding of the author's actual commitment informs a philosophical work. The same could be argued for the reciprocal case, namely, searching for what the author ought to commit to could inform a scholarly work on the author. Nevertheless, the distinction is important for it captures a certain disparity. To elucidate this disparity we can straightforwardly point to the difficulty with our current author, Marx. Marx's work involved many transformations. These transformations could not be understood without taking into account the space and time in which he was theorizing. Specifically, the context is that of 19th Century Europe, the 1848 revolutions and its aftermath, the 'lag' of Germany behind revolutionary France and industrial England, the engagement with French socialists, the engagement with English political economists, and lastly the engagement with German philosophy and philosophers. We could also say, that Marx's

political engagement animates his thought, but it is also what posits a difficulty in asserting a certain continuity in his thought. For the purpose of this work, we are interested in reading Marx *from* Philosophy. In that sense, the questions of this work are the following: How to read Marx philosophically? Is there a philosophical contribution in Marx's work? Did Philosophy as a discipline properly treat the challenges/contributions in Marx's work? As such, we can state that the reading here is close to what Brandom calls a *de re* interpretation. Therefore, the task of this work is to search for what Marx *ought* to commit to.

It is left to say how this philosophical reading proceeds. Since Marx did not elaborate any philosophical treatises, and moreover, since he produced explanations of social reality (explanations that must differ fundamentally from the empirical (natural) sciences), the appropriate investigation is to elaborate an understanding of Marx's method. We could say that the concern here is Kantian, namely, we are searching for the *conditions of possibility* of Marxian explanations. The focus is therefore primarily methodological.

B. Methodology: Justification and Genealogy

1. Method and Truth

At the outset, we must problematize the notion of *methodology*. In the introduction to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel attacks Kant on the ground of Cognition, namely, on the question of how Cognition is possible and what is cognizable and what is not. According to Hegel, Kant ultimately treats Cognition as an instrument. In the Kantian outlook, Cognition makes it possible for the Subject to get hold of objectivity. Put differently, the Subject uses Cognition to reach objectivity; Cognition therefore stands in between the Subject and the Object.

Hegel rejects this view, considering Kant to be instrumentalist about Cognition. What underlies this rejection is the threat that Hegel finds in holding to an instrumentalist point of view, namely, that it leaves the way open for the skeptic to undermine objectivity. This skeptical tendency is characterized in the 19th Century by its Semantic Nihilism, that is, by its rejection of meaning.¹⁴ In the Brandomian reading, Hegel's move rests on explicating the relation between *reason* and *semantics* (otherwise construed as *thought* and *language*), or rather on the inseparability of the two. BH presents this relation via a set of criteria for anything to be known at all. Meaning, that is, conceptual content, is inseparable from believing or asserting it. By positing Reason against itself, Kant produces a set of dichotomies that allow him to separate what is objective from what is not, and more importantly, to assert the possibility of objective knowledge. In this approach Kant contrasts Concepts and Intuitions, Form and Content, Phenomena and Noumena. Kant's move unfolds in setting the criterion and the limits of meaningful content. Meaningful content must neither be empty nor blind; it is grasped through following the motto "thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind".¹⁵ In this view, meaningful content belongs to the phenomena (the realm of appearances), it is grasped through the correct use of forms, defined by Kant as the set of pure forms of the Understanding (Categories) and the set of pure forms of Intuitions (Space and Time). Hegel considers this separation to be elusive. As it is classically known, Hegel is unsatisfied with the grounding of Reason on the *categories* and the pure forms of Intuitions. He takes this set to be another set of baseless assumptions yielding the

¹⁴ On this reading, this skeptical tendency could also be traced in the 20th Century through its 'post-structuralist' variants.

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 193-194.

Kantian project as incomplete in the rejection of classical metaphysics, that is, that Kant ends up substantializing the Categories and the Pure Forms of Intuitions. However, this criticism should not overshadow the huge influence of Kant on Hegel. In the Brandomian reading, Hegel is radicalizing Kant in the attempt to assert a non-metaphysical account that preserves *objectivity* and *truth* as legitimate concepts and thereby overcoming skepticism. In BH, this move entails a serious engagement with semantics.

2. Form and Content

If thought and semantics are to be treated as a unity, then already any move to take any conceptual system as merely a method, that is as providing the form that must apply to a certain content, is at best a regression to Kant. Therefore, in our present examination, we will avoid reading Marx's conceptual apparatus as merely a method, given the direction of reading Marx as a (post-) Hegelian thinker, or alternatively treating the conceptual apparatus as a method that *encompasses* its content. To unpack the last statement, we are *extracting* a method from a body of work. Moreover, any body of work understood as encompassing judgments and assertions follows a certain method, or more generally assumes a certain form (whether the content of concepts, how concepts relate, or the hierarchy of the concepts (some could be transcendental, others empirical, or some more *secure*, others more *vulnerable*, or yet, some more useful, other less useful, and so on)). The extraction of a method is the explication of that which is implicit in the body of work, precisely *how* the moves (inferences) are made. If we embark on explicating Marx's method, this by no means implies the retrieval of a formal body of work that is applicable in general, i.e. one that is transcendental. Rather, inquiring into methodology serves to assess the

body of work itself. These considerations are present in Brandom's work. In fact, Brandom's understanding of the relation between act and content already entails a non-formalist philosophical account. Formalization - the logic of explication in Brandom's account - is the retrieval of the implicit *at the level* of content; it resorts to *other* content to make sense of the discrepancy between act and content. Once the search starts, two competing kinds of content are available: reasons and causes. *Justification* deals with the former, *Genealogy* with the latter. Both methods are explanatory; moreover, Brandom's contention is that the adoption of both avoids the trap of formalism. The opposition of reasons and causes therefore animates a non-formalist philosophical account.

While justification is occupied with the reasons that could be given for a certain assertion that is ultimately composed of conceptual content and therefore assessing the *status* of the assertion based on the reasons given in support of it, genealogy is occupied with causes underlying an assertion and therefore tracing the *causal origin* of conceptual content. For every assertion then, one can attempt either method. For BH, neither methods are a priori appropriate so neither should enjoy an unqualified primacy over the other. At the core of BH's project is the need for explicating the relation between *justification* and *reasons*, *genealogy* and *causes* and finally *justification* and *genealogy*. This need manifests itself through the rejection of the two variants of the 'myth of the given'; i.e. the metaphysical fusion of reasons and causes on one hand; the empiricist conflation of causation with justification on the other.

3. Subject and Object

To state the problem in terms of the relation between Subject and Object, it might be useful to invoke the similarity between Hegel's critique of the instrumentalization of reason and the critique of justification proper and genealogy proper. In the introduction to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel differentiates between two variants of methodological considerations. One treats cognition as an instrument, and the other as a medium. For Hegel, both variants accordingly open the way for skepticism.

Justification emphasizes the subject; it fits the analogy of the instrument. The problem with the instrument is that it shapes its object, yet it assumes that it can abstract its intervention and still have the object. Justification risks deflating the object. To elucidate this point: In focusing on reasons (reasons that the subject can give), it is assumed that there is always a reason that can be given. In so far as this assumption is a presupposition, it is not problematic. It becomes problematic if posited as such: "everything has a reason". If this slip is made, immediacy is re-established. In other words, while a conception of instrument seems to preserve the subject-object distinction, where the instrument itself is the mediation, it nevertheless collapses the object in the subject, for it assumes that it can retrieve its intervention: Justification proper slips into metaphysics.

On the other hand, genealogy emphasizes the object, it fits the analogy of medium. The problem of the medium is that it assumes that the subject can passively receive truth, the truth of the object without interference. Genealogy risks deflating the subject. To elucidate this point: In focusing on causes, genealogy does not problematize how it is possible for the subject to access these causes. The subject is no longer a contributor, rather it passively receives a given: causes.

In this sense, genealogy proper also reestablishes immediacy, for as with the instrument, the medium seems to preserve the subject-object distinction where the medium is itself the mediation, it nevertheless collapses the subject in the object, for it assumes that there is no intervention: Genealogy proper slips into metaphysics.

We can say in a preliminary way that a robust relation between Subject and Object is at stake for BH. Explicating this relation (and therefore preserving the distinction) is fundamental as a framework for articulating the antagonistic relation between justification and genealogy. In the next section, we attempt to tackle the accumulated distinctions through what we argue is a central and methodologically useful distinction. This is the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual.

C. The Conceptual and the non-Conceptual

1. *Why the Distinction?*

It will be useful in this work to focus on the distinction between the *conceptual* and the *non-conceptual*. Arguably, since Descartes' shift from a paradigm of *resemblance* to a paradigm of *representation*,¹⁶ a radical shift in the limits as well as in the intelligibility of knowing has taken place.¹⁷ More importantly, every epistemological construal implied and/or incorporated a new demarcation between epistemology and metaphysics. Moreover, this demarcation however construed became tightly linked to the relation between Subject and Object. This last relation is

¹⁶ In *A Spirit of Trust*, Brandom credits John Haugeland for the understanding of this transition in terms of 'resemblance' and 'representation'. See John Haugeland, *Artificial Intelligence: The Very Idea* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

¹⁷ We are concerned here with the shift from Descartes to Kant to Hegel.

classically understood as a relation between knower and known, and on a practical level it became a question of what constitutes autonomous beings as distinct from mere objects. The focus on the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual is an attempt to systematically tackle the aforementioned dichotomies and make explicit the difference between the different construals of these dichotomies. The point is of course to finally be able to articulate the philosophical underpinnings of Marx's work.¹⁸ In the Kantian project, this is the distinction between the *conceptual* and the *sensible*, while in the Hegelian project, it is the distinction between the *Notion* and the *Unrealized Concept*. However, before any exploration of the distinction, it is crucial to note at the outset that the distinction is *not* between what is *produced* and what is *given*. In the latter understanding, the non-conceptual would be the *given* to either Kant's transcendental Subject or to Hegel's *Geist*. No such *given* is granted by the German Idealists, nor by their American inheritors (Sellars and Brandom). Conflating the non-conceptual with some *given* will be read here as pre-Kantian.

2. Distinction for Kant

In Kantian terms, a concept is a rule, the use of which is governed by the rules of rules (Pure Forms of the Understanding). A Concept is a universal applied through judgment to phenomenal (spatiotemporal) particulars, thereby subsuming the manifold of intuitions. The usage of a concept is therefore regulated by the *categories* and the pure forms of *sensibility*

¹⁸ This is not simply a work of 'compare and contrast', Marx's contribution to philosophy - if any - must be articulated. The reliance on Kant is precisely to overcome this deficiency. A crucial opposition between Kant and Hegel is their construal of the epistemology-ontology divide. Marx's never-ending reminder of the difference between the *real* and *mere thought* could be formalized based on the divide in Kant (given that Kant does not relinquish the distinction between epistemology and metaphysics). Of course, the comparison is homologous and not analogous, that is, it is meant to capture similarities at the level of the relation itself rather than the constitution of the poles.

(Space and Time). Space and Time set the scope - and therefore the limit - to the application of concepts. In this view, the non-conceptual designates the scope of the conceptual. Knowledge and the Knower are understood in terms of the specific conditioning of the conceptual by the non-conceptual. Moreover, the non-conceptual is *not* external to Reason yet is external to the Understanding. Space and Time as pure forms of intuitions are deduced through Reason as the counter part of the faculty of Understanding. The building block comprising *sensibility*, *understanding* and *reason* is meant to enable an objective reality reachable by the Subject, escaping the trope of both Berkeleyian Idealism (Empiricism) and Dogmatic Rationalism. In Brandomian words, Kant attempts to make sense of the notion of sapient being by reconciling the tension between the realm of *ought* and the realm of *is*, or articulating the limits of each. Kant's crucial contribution is the identification of cognitive experience - the experience of sapient beings - with the production of judgments. For Kant then, experience is conceptual, however this experience is conditioned by the non-conceptual, understood by Kant as the pure forms of intuitions. Beyond these boundaries, whatever is *thought* cannot be *known* nor *experienced* (cannot be judged).

3. Distinction for BH

On the other hand, for Hegel the distinction between the conceptual and the non-conceptual is itself conceptual. This radical move - what sounds like a retreat to Berkeleyian Idealism - is enabled through the injection of *time* into Reason. While Kant resorts to the transcendental anchoring of objectivity (finding its conditions of possibility), Hegel resorts to *history*, understood as the logical unfolding of the presuppositions that make *current* objectivity

possible. Hegel's rejection of the grounding of Reason on the categories and the pure forms of intuitions is captured by Brandom through the motto "all transcendental constitution is social institution".¹⁹ In the Brandomian reading, a conceptual dynamism introduced by Hegel is worked out through the relation between the *explicit* and the *implicit*. Theoretical work is the making explicit of what is already implicit in discursive practice. On a more abstract level, the last statement is an articulation of the relation between *is* and *ought* in terms of the relation between saying and doing. On this view, the non-conceptual is that which is not conceptualized *yet* (made explicit), the explication of which is done through the movement of the *Geist* (the community of sapient beings) understood as the continuous resolution of the discrepancy between that which *is* and what it *ought to be*. Conceptualizing the non-conceptual — making explicit the implicit in practices — is therefore the 're-coinciding' of that which *is* with what it *ought to be*. What is crucial to note here is that experience is no longer conditioned by the non-conceptual; rather the non-conceptual is subsumed in *Geist's* experience; conceptualizing the non-conceptual is part of *Geist's* experience. The move from the *sensible* to the *implicit* is crucial to the development of the antagonistic relation between Marx and BH.²⁰

4. Concept, Representation and Misrepresentation

In order to critically engage with BH's treatment of the *non-conceptual* and its relation to the *conceptual*, a robust formulation of the *conceptual* is needed. The focus on *concepts* as

¹⁹ Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 48.

²⁰ This is not to suggest that Marx adopts Kant's designation of the non-conceptual (the sensible), yet he develops a transcendental argument for the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual which we will go through later on.

opposed to *representations* can be traced back to Kant. In the pre-Kantian paradigm, *representation* captured the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. On this view, *representings* (things that represent) are conceptual, while *represented*s (things that are being represented) are non-conceptual. Furthermore, the relation between the Subject - understood as the *I think* - and the *representings* had to be taken as *immediate*, for *mediation* is nothing but the relation of representation. Moreover, since the relation between *representings* and the Subject must be construed representationally, an infinite regress would follow, since what *represents representings* must also be represented, and so on. On the other hand, for Kant, the Subject has no more privilege in accessing thoughts than in accessing Objects; this is captured when he writes about the “I, or He, or It (the thing), which thinks”.²¹ In this understanding the Subject is neither empirical (the psychological self) nor metaphysical (an immaterial substance): the Subject is transcendental (a condition of experience, rather than anything experienced, whether empirically or metaphysically). However, what is accessible non-representationally for Kant is the relation of representation itself. In BH’s reading, Kant is still stuck in a representationalist account of cognition. The move away from representationalism is operated in BH in terms of *intentionality*, namely by the *subordination* of the representational dimension of intentionality (‘of’ intentionality) to the conceptual dimension of intentionality (‘that’ intentionality).²² Already in the representationalist paradigm two parts are implied: something is being represented by something else (respectively *represented* and *representing*); this is further understood by Hegel through the distinction between *for consciousness* and *in-itself*. Something

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 414.

²² This ‘subordination’ is far from a rejection of ‘representation’, rather it is an attempt to make sense of it, namely to make it intelligible through the intelligibility of *misrepresentation*.

is *for consciousness* if it is explicit to Consciousness as an *as*, that is, Consciousness understands that it *takes* something to be such and such. This is the expressive conceptual dimension ('that' intentionality). This last insight is hinted at by Kant, but yet not elaborated. Following Kant's account, Experience is judging (the application of concepts through the activity of judging). When an agent judges, he/she commits to a certain conceptual content. In this sense, the agent is *responsible* for the conceptual content. However for Kant, this is not the whole story, for to qualify as *contentful*, judgments must be conditioned by the pure forms of intuitions, otherwise the concepts would be empty, they wouldn't *represent* anything. The conceptual dimension and the representational dimension are separated in Kant through the distinction between the faculty of understanding and the pure forms of intuitions. The problem of this approach is skepticism as sketched in the previous section. For Brandom, Hegel wants to understand the representational dimension in terms of the conceptual dimension. Put in terms of intentionality, this means understanding the *of* in terms of *that*. In this view, Consciousness expresses through judgment a conceptual content, it commits to this content, it takes it as true. Yet its recognition of the "as" or the "for", posits an "in-itself" and as such a possible discrepancy between the "for" and the "in itself". The relation between the "for" and the "in itself" is representation (this is the role Kant allots to the forms of intuitions). Representation makes the notion of *objectivity* intelligible. In this approach, Brandom subordinates the *objective* to the *subjective* in the sense that it presupposes it.²³ Representation therefore presupposes Expression. Expression is always conceptual (it has conceptual content). This move is supposed to make representation intelligible

²³ Brandom understands this subordination in terms of *sense-dependency* as opposed to *reference-dependency*. If 'A' is sense-dependent on 'B', then an understanding of 'A' is impossible without an understanding of 'B', whereas if 'A' is reference-dependent on 'B', then 'A' can't exist without 'B'.

through the intelligibility of *misrepresentation*. The criteria in Kant are the transcendental concepts (Categories) and the transcendental non-concepts (Space and Time). But BH transposes Kant's rigid limits into a dynamic social assessment: *Commitment, Responsibility* and *Entitlement* are socially relevant normative statuses, in terms of which both act and content are judged. Paradigmatically, this assessment is enacted in the game of giving and asking for reasons. Narrowing down the 'search' for the non-conceptual in BH, we now focus on this *assessment*. But before that, we set out the general picture.

5. Friction, Discrepancy and Assessment

In Brandom's construal of the picture, there is a world out there, this world is conceptual, it exhibits relations of material incompatibility. The alethic modal relations however are inconceivable without the deontic normative ones. In order to talk about the world, the normative is presupposed. However, if the normative does not stand in a certain relation with the alethic, then again we can't talk about the world. In order to talk about the world, we must construe the world as conceptual (as providing reasons for the assessment of our normative commitments). Talk of the objective is conditioned by the subjective; moreover, the subjective *must* be conditioned by the objective. The objective is always already *talk about* the objective. For "is" we need "of" and "ought": "of" for it to be object (other) at all, "ought" as a condition for an "is" to be *said* or *thought* at all. "Of" is the relation between the subjective and the objective; "is" is the objective", "ought" is the subjective. The engine is the "do". Without the "do" there is no dynamism. Thus the sequence is: "do" then "ought" then "of" then "is". All that is thought is conceptual, all that is said is conceptual, all that is said or thought *about* is conceptual. For a

conceptual thought to be about something (i.e. to be *determined*), that something must be conceptual; there is no something that is non-conceptual. It is easier to think of this in terms of different vocabularies and meta-vocabularies. There are the normative and factual vocabularies and the meta-vocabularies (the vocabulary of relating vocabularies) of the aforementioned vocabularies. This is indeed Semantic Idealism, yet this is not a commitment to the irreality of an external world, or its dependence on us, or so is the claim, for through the discrepancies and the resolution of the discrepancies we can validate that there is a representational dimension, that is, that the vocabulary that represents *actually* represents. Discrepancies are therefore the guarantee against a “frictionless spinning in the void”.²⁴ Moreover, what is crucial is that these discrepancies must be *determined*, that is they should be specific and knowable. These discrepancies — captured through material incompatibilities — could be traced at the level of the alethic (objective) or the deontic (subjective). Moreover ‘objective’ material incompatibility compels a movement of commitments (exclusion and inclusion) at the subjective level. ‘Capturing’ these discrepancies is the act of explicating what is implicit in the practices, in other words the explication reveals the mismatch between content and act, or more broadly between theory and practice. The implication is both a transformation at the level of theory and practice (new commitment to new content, and acting upon the new content, that is taking it as *binding*). Brandom emphasizes Hegel’s notion of *to consciousness*, a notion he thinks is both indispensable and largely ignored. *To consciousness* captures the discrepancy between what consciousness takes to be the case and what is actually the case. Consciousness is not only responsible for what it takes as true; it already acknowledges this by assuming the representational dimension (the ‘of’

²⁴ John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 11.

intentionality). We can say preliminarily that in Brandom's work the non-conceptual splits into two concepts, the *implicit* and *to consciousness* (the discrepancy between the *as* and the *actual*). Moreover, the two concepts are co-dependent: *to consciousness* captures the discrepancy between *saying* (explicit) (the *as*) and *doing* (implicit) (the *actual*), but we must not forget that *saying* is also a form of *doing* (a discursive practice) to which explication also applies, this explication brings into light the discrepancies.

D. Brandom's Local and Global Genealogy

1. Contingency, Necessity and Discrepancy

The problem of discrepancy is intimately linked to modality. For BH, there is both normative necessity and material necessity. The first belongs to the deontic realm, it has the form of a *must*: the subject *ought* to resolve subjective material incompatibility (incompatibilities between commitments) given his commitment to objective material compatibility. The second belongs to the realm of the alethic, modal relations (possibility, impossibility, necessity) that objects stand to each other, the material necessity takes the form of *is*. Contingency is an *anomaly* vis-à-vis the already existing structure of *ought* and *is*. This contingency is nothing but the discrepancy between the two structures. It is a contingency with respect to *our* structures that we take as binding. Geistig beings are always in the process of treating contingencies by the incorporation of these contingencies into the aforementioned structures. In the realm of the alethic, *laws* change when newly discovered causes (read anomalies) undermine the already existing laws. In this case, a change in the commitments follow in the realm of deontic. However things get trickier when the object is at the same time a subject; that is, when the contingency is

presented in the act of another sapient being. As an object, a sapient being stands in the same alethic modal relations (possibility, impossibility, necessity); for instance a sapient being cannot *be* and *not be* at the same time, or the laws of gravity cannot both apply and not apply to him/her. On the other hand, as a subject, this sapient being belongs to a community of actors and speakers; his/her acts and assertions are subjected to assessment by the community, he/she is responsible to what he/she says as well as to his/her acts. In this case, *facts* or *norms* are about *us* and not the world. To take an example that Brandom offers, a Judge is supposed to practice his duties as per juridical rules, however the Judge can fail in his work (misjudges someone as guilty for instance), the focus of this failure here is not an insufficiency in his intellectual ability to judge wisely (inferential articulation, material consequences), the failure of the Judge is based on something irrelevant to the case, in Brandom's example, something the Judge ate in the morning which is irrelevant to the case at hand. In this case, the Judge cannot *justify* his judgment; no reasons can be given to explain the judgment and therefore assess the reasons. The appropriate explanation here is causal. Moreover, the treatment here is not a process of exclusion and inclusion of commitments, for there is no commitment that the Judge takes as binding that must be revised or relinquished.²⁵ Yet, this resort to genealogy follows a specific criterion: A failure to find a justification for an act. To delineate between legitimate genealogy (one that follows a criterion) and an illegitimate genealogy (one that does not follow a criterion), BH introduces the distinction between *local* and *global*. A local genealogy employs a causal explanation for *specific* acts, while on the other hand, a global genealogy employs a causal explanations for every act as such. For a local genealogy to succeed it must follow a criterion, for which BH already has a

²⁵ This points to the appropriate use of Genealogy for BH. The next step is to deal with this discrepancy. This will be discussed in the next section.

suggestion (the one mentioned above); on the other hand, BH provides an argument against global genealogy.

2. Incoherence of Global Genealogy

BH's wager is that *Global Genealogy* — the thesis that *all* reasons are reducible to causes — is incoherent. In contemporary analytical philosophy, this is the thesis of reductive materialism. In contemporary discussions, Science as understood in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, for which the paradigmatic science is Physics, is supposed to account for normativity, intentionality, meaning and reasons. According to Brandom, the global genealogist attempts to undermine reasons as such and provide a causal explanation instead. In Brandomian terms, global genealogy attempts to explain the content of all normative attitudes (what is taken as correct) and as such break the alleged *force* that normative statuses (what actually is correct) have over normative attitudes. In this reading, normative statuses are nothing but an *effect* of the underlying causes. This account for Brandom is incoherent. The argument is similar to the classical refutation of the radical skeptic, whereby the radical skeptic undermines *everything*, including his own position, forcing the skeptic to remain silent. In the conceptual apparatus that Brandom presents, by separating normative attitudes from normative statuses, the genealogist attempts to explain rational behavior through irrational causes. The genealogist separates act from content, yet once separated, the genealogist has no place to make sense of the act, for the act makes sense (is meaningful) because it is *contentful*. Brandom preemptively deals with the discrepancy between act and content; in fact this discrepancy animates his account. However if the discrepancy sets limits to justification, it does the same to genealogy. The rationale can be

expressed as follows: No explanation is possible without justification, or put differently, any non-meaningful (i.e. causal) explanation presupposes semantics. On the other hand, justification cannot make sense of discrepancies between act and content. In pre-modern Geist, the burden of this discrepancy was always handed to the subject, thus the pre-modern individual is *heroic* (because he accepts the burden) and *tragic* (because he takes *full* responsibility for the discrepancy). The discrepancy therefore legitimizes the genealogist's attitude, yet treating the discrepancy as a total break, breaks any genealogy (and any explanation) on the way. The solution for BH is an account that incorporates both justification and genealogy. This is the focus of the next section.

3. Marx as Local Genealogist

BH's treatment of local genealogy — the explanation of the content of *certain* normative attitudes using causes — is different. The local genealogist as per BH does not undermine justification as such and therefore content as such, and therefore does not undermine the *potency* of justification beyond a certain finite set of content that it claims to explain. If we read Marx as a local genealogist we get the following: Marx focuses on political norms (justice, liberty, equality, et al), the content of which he attempts to explain through underlying economic mechanisms. Thus, Marx introduces a distinction by dividing a community into the opposite poles of production (workers and owners of the means of production). By explicating the class structure, Marx undermines the commitment to justice, liberty and equality. The classical liberal construal of a community sees individuals in a set of one-to-one relations that ought to fall under the social contract which holds the political values of the community; however this symmetrical

relation between individuals collapses when considering classes. The relation between the class of owners of the means of production (the bourgeoisie) and the working class (the proletariat) is asymmetrical, since the bourgeoisie takes for its own the surplus of the proletariat's labor. This work is a one-way explanation of norms using causes. However we should bear in mind that this kind of genealogy (whether we're following a Brandomian reading of Marx or following a classical reading of Marx) is not meant to *abolish* the aforementioned political norms, rather it's suspicious about the *constitution* of their content, for instance, the concept of 'equality' is shown to be distorted; in Brandomian terms, there are certain material incompatibilities (deontic material compatibilities) that are not dealt with (abolishing commitments that are not consistent with the larger - or more fundamental²⁶ - constellation of commitments). If the normative assessment anchored in the social practices is supposed to eliminate the material incompatibilities and if the incompatibilities persist, the claim is that a certain *blockage* is preventing the community's self-correction process. The blockage is understood through the discrepancy between content and act (or between normative attitudes and normative statuses). Whereas individuals in the community commit to 'justice', the real (the doing) does not correspond to the content; the class division proves the falsity of the content, the content therefore has no force over the act. As such, the content works as a veil that hides the practices. However Marx is not calling for the rejection of 'justice' in the name of scientific explanation, he is rather *for* the concept of justice. This is puzzling if one reads Marx as a genealogist, for if

²⁶ 'fundamental' here means the centrality of these conceptual contents, understood in their robust inferential relations to other content. Put differently, the centrality here refers to the intensity of the network that relate these concept to other concepts. It is worth mentioning that this is in no way a guarantee that these concepts are correct, it only means they are more robust *for their holder* than other concepts.

political commitments are undermined by revealing the underlying causal process, it is hard to see on what grounds Marx attempts to reinforce equality, freedom, etc. In other words, if Marx is committed to bridging the gap between act and content, this means a commitment to the game of giving and asking for reasons; yet since Marx's alleged genealogy rests on demonstrating the discrepancy based on causal explanations, it is hard to see why one would *trust* the content in the first place, or why one would trust any other content. The question is: What are the commitments that must be rejected in the process of self-correction? In this understanding, Marx reveals an implicit commitment – one to class - and claims that this commitment is incompatible with the commitment to 'equality'. To reveal this implicit commitment Marx resorts to a causal explanation, the capitalist as an individual does not *take* the commitment to class as binding, yet in practice (by securing his and his class interest) he is in reality committed. So what we have so far is the following: Marx produces causal explanations that reveal an implicit commitment to class (a part of a community). The causal explanation depends on the study of the practices (practices related to the process of production). Once these commitments are revealed, the political commitments that individuals in the community *take* as binding are undermined, for they conflict with their revealed class-commitments. In order to reveal the incompatibility, Marx explicates the inferential articulations of the political norms, which up until his intervention did not take class distinction into consideration, and therefore the character of the relation between classes as distinct from the relation between individuals. Members of the community are then pressured to correct their commitments. However, members of the ruling class are not compelled to correct their commitments for that would imply relinquishing their interests and privileges; rather the ruling class, given its resources and privileges, distorts the incompatibility by

presenting inequality as a *fact* about the world (belonging to the alethic realm) and therefore as something not requiring any adjustment of their commitments with regard to class. Given this, Marx then finds the potential for overcoming the incompatibility and therefore the actualization of justice in the working class, the class for which the asymmetrical relation between classes is disadvantageous. It is important to bear in mind that in this discrepancy between content and act (between acknowledged political norms and practices), what is at stake is a transformation of both content and act in an attempt to ensure that the content does correspond to the act. For Marx, and since the community is divided precisely in terms of conflict of interest rather than adequate justifications, this cannot be ensured through the game of giving and asking for reasons; rather the transformation must start at the level of practices, i.e. through a break in the relations of production.

4. *Incoherence or Incoherence*

It is left to see what Brandom makes out of the demarcation of genealogy under its local and global variants. Brandom's target of criticism is the global genealogist. However, Brandom does not elaborate much on his position with regard to the local genealogist, which in principle he finds outside the range of the criticisms brought against the global genealogist. Interestingly however, what is one to make out of the critique of globalizing genealogy? The question is, how can a genealogy be local? By positing these two variants, Brandom not only attacks the global genealogist, but leaves the task of *delimiting* the genealogy to its holder. Rhetorically then, the question is whether Marx can articulate the limits of his suspicion or whether he is incoherent. Brandom puts the burden on Marx to show why his genealogy concerns only the content of a

certain set of normative attitudes, in other words, he must show us why other contents are to be *trusted*. If the ‘suspicion’ is valid, then Brandom does not see that Marx differs significantly from the global genealogist in so far as we’re concerned with method. For if the condition for a genealogy is the lack of justification, then the ‘local’ is not to be understood merely in contradistinction with the ‘global’; rather, the local denotes its subjectivist constitution. In other words, local genealogy (the permissible variant of genealogy) must be anchored in the failure of an agent to give reasons. We can then say that Brandom opposes a *subjectivist* local genealogy to *objectivist* global genealogy. The challenge is then: Is there an objective explanation that does not slip into global genealogy? This challenge will be the focus on Chapter IV, where we suggest a reading of Marx that does not conform with neither of Brandom’s variants. In the next section, we elaborate what BH takes to be an appropriate and essential use of local genealogy.

E. BH’s post-modern Geist: Reconciliation

1. *Subjectivity and Alienation*

The distinction between reasons and causes, and subsequently the distinction between justification and genealogy, marks the rupture between pre-modernity and modernity for BH. To decouple reasons and causes is to conceive of a difference between the *normative* and the *natural*. To conflate the two is to assume immediacy with norms, and as such the notion of ‘subjectivity’ is inconceivable. Subjectivity is therefore central to the ‘one great event that happened to Geist’ which BH emphasizes. Moreover it is central to the debates over the ‘post-modern’ stage, specifically *what* and *where* the subject is. For Kant, the subject is apperceptive, it is a transcendental condition for thinking *and* experiencing as such where thinking is conceptual

and experience is nothing but the application of concepts through judgments. Moreover, the synthetic unity of apperception unifies the constellation of judgments along with the manifold of intuitions, its role is constitutive, it makes a holistic experience possible, by ascribing 'I think' to thought and judgment. The subject is traced through Reason's self-critique. For BH, subjectivity became explicit with the non-identification with norms, where identification is supposed to be immediate. The mediation is the subject's awareness of the normative rather than natural status of norms. The subject learns that *we* are the creators of norms. The modern subject identifies with attitudes. However, the Brandomian move is that once the subject identifies with attitudes, he is identifying with *content*. Moreover, the content is conceptual, and therefore the subject unknowingly - or unwillingly - reifies the status of norms. "I know that I know nothing" is knowing. In an abstract sense, this entails the dependency of the subject on the object. BH's subject must be understood in relation to and in contrast with the object. Both the subject and the object are conceptual; they are "conceptual concepts" or meta-concepts (we speak of objective and subjective structures) available to and constitutive of *Geistig* beings.²⁷

Brandom characterizes the pre-modern normative structure as non-alienated. This is the move to Modernity for Brandom. Alienation is the non-identification with norms. Alienation means non-*Sittlichkeit*. However, Subjectivity and Alienation are co-dependent, at least in the rise of subjectivity. The non-identification with norms allows self-expression. If identification

²⁷ 'Geistig' is not a psychological category, it is an ontological category, it's an attempt to capture what the being *is*, however we are reminded that *is* entails an *ought*, what the Geistig being *is* is an *ought to be* Geistig; this might seem circular, but yet again we are reminded that consciousness's distinctive trait is its self-relation, the co-dependency of the deontic and the alethic, as well as the thesis of conceptual idealism, are understood in talking about Geistig beings as beings that are what they ought to be. Of course the question then becomes, how do we know what the Geistig beings ought to be? This is understood in the responsibility of the deontic to the alethic; the determination of Geistig being is homomorphic to the determination of the alethic. Geistig beings have history rather than nature.

with norms is complete, there is no space for subjectivity, at least as explicit. Implicitly, subjectivity can be traced in conflicts between different cognitive communities, in the “contradiction of laws”. In modernity, objective incompatibilities are resolved by the revision of commitments (on the subjective side). One is responsible not only for what one is committed to (what one takes *as* binding) but also for what *is* the case. The distinction between the *is* and the *as* enables the subject, and the discrepancy between the two enables the universal, by posing the subject’s commitments to assessment.

2. Deed and Action

BH conceives of modernity as characterized by hyper-subjectivity while the pre-modern is characterized by hyper-objectivity. This is captured through the distinction between *Tat* and *Handlung*. *Tat* encompasses *Handlung*. *Handlung* is the action that the agent *takes* himself to be responsible for, it is what the agent intends to do. *Tat* captures all the specifications of the action. In the traditional conception, the agent is responsible for *Tat*, this is why it is tragic, one is responsible for more than what he intends. It is heroic because the agent takes this responsibility. BH wants to preserve the heroic agent and avoid tragedy. While in modernity, the agent only takes responsibility for what he intends, in post-modernity he recognizes that a doing is assessed on two grounds, an objective and a subjective ground. The intention of the agent is essential; however, the communal norm is just as essential. The heroic agent acknowledges the responsibility for consequences beyond the intention. However, this is not tragic because the community recognizes the discrepancy and as such, it forgives. The treatment of discrepancies

culminates in BH in a post-modern recognitive structure: A spirit of Trust, a community of non-tragic heroes.

3. *Confession and Forgiveness*

If the transition to Modernity made the notion of ‘contingency’ intelligible, the transition to post-modernity signifies the explication of the theoretical and practical treatment of contingencies. The theoretical work is the identification of contingency *as* contingency. The practical work is the subsumption of this contingency in necessity. For BH, ‘confession’ and ‘forgiveness’ capture these two efforts respectively. Confession is the identification of contingency, it is the confession of the *judged* that he/she holds no justification for his/her act, and therefore the act can’t be understood in terms of the judged’s commitments: the resort is to attitudes. Crucially however, for confession to succeed, it must be repeated by the *judge*: to effectively treat the contingency *as* contingency, the Judge must confess that he/she is prone to act upon attitudes in contradiction with commitments, otherwise, the Judge does not really recognize the discrepancy between act and content, and therefore, cannot be said to act upon his/her commitments. Confession therefore involves the confession of both Judge and Judged. Based on this confession, forgiveness becomes possible. Forgiveness is the retrospective transformation of contingency into necessity. In other words, forgiveness is the incorporation of contingency in a narrative, it has the form: “the judged’s act was necessary given thus and so”. The practices of confession and forgiveness capture the reconciliatory attitude: to *reconcile* is not to find a midpoint in a dispute, rather it is the engagement in the game of giving and asking for reasons which yields the better reason. This ‘better reason’ is directed against the act and not the actor.

However the actor must *take responsibility* for the act once he/she fails in giving the ‘better reason’. Reconciliation is the insistence on the better reason rather than mere mediation.

Agreement in this understanding is a presupposition: An agreement to play the game of giving and asking for reasons. Furthermore, the ‘triumph’ of the better reason is materialized in confession and forgiveness, two steps towards the re-establishment of the correspondence of the act to the content, and more precisely, to the *committed* content.

CHAPTER III: BRANDOM, HEGEL AND MARX: CONCEPTS, CONTRADICTIONS AND DIALECTICS

A. On the non-Conceptual's Relation to the Conceptual

Although the distinction between the conceptual and non-conceptual has been elaborated in the previous chapter, the point was to encapsulate BH's philosophical project in terms of the distinction, an effort that should turn fruitful once we use the distinction to situate Marx vis-a-vis Philosophy. In this chapter, we depart from the exposition of BH to the problematization of his work, precisely by relying on the distinction between the conceptual and non-conceptual. This attempt necessitates revising the distinction in a manner that exposes what we take to be a deficiency in BH's project.

If Brandom, following an intersection of traditions, rejects the primacy of representation, it is not however to escape the question of Thought's relation to Being, but rather a reattempt at articulating this relationship. The pair of *subject* and *object* and the structural turn which gives primacy of relations over entities re-envision the question of Thought and Being in terms that override the question of the *possibility* of this interaction, and starts from the attempt of making sense of this already existing interaction; thus *practices* become the new focus, for they capture the unity as well as the disparity of the two. However, the weakness of the Brandomian account is - or let us say the question mark is over - the adequacy of his treatment of this disparity. By transposing the problem in terms of *theory* and *practice*, Brandom focuses on the task of bridging the two; a task that is unfinishable. Yet, this relaxed attitude towards discrepancies between the two is overly abstract, for it does not bother to determine the contingencies, but deals with them *a priori*. A choice between *justification* and *genealogy* is forced, and the primacy

of the former is reasoned for, and preemptively the radical genealogist is neutralized. Thus Brandom strategically attacks the theorist of contingencies and keeps an ‘open-minded’ attitude towards their hypothesization. The issue however is that the strength of the Brandomian move rests on his subversion of the simple, philosophically impoverished opposition of Thought and Being. Moreover, the weakness of this opposition is precisely the dualism it generates (since Descartes onwards); yet Brandom, following Hegel, rejects these dualisms, whether between form and content, between the realm of is and the realm of ought or between the subject and object, in order to transpose these problems onto new grounds and produce a new set of dichotomies, whether between reasons and causes, sapience and sentience, history and nature and most importantly necessity and contingency. To produce dichotomies or to transform old ones is not by itself problematic, the classical alternative of dualism (monism) also suffers from a whole set of problematics. Yet, given the Hegelian credentials of Brandom, a clear understanding of the status of these oppositions is needed, for the Hegelian move, methodologically captured by the notion of *Dialectics* is allegedly an attempt to *think through* contradictions. In other words, while Brandom bypassed old preset dichotomies, he ended up producing new sets that are left untreated. Sapient beings differ from sentient beings in that the former have *histories* while the latter have *natures*. The primary space for the former is that of reasons while for the latter is that of causes. Yet, since *oughts* are *responsible* to what *is* and since *is* is conceived only based on *oughts*, the acts of sapient beings must attend to what *is*; however, what *is* for sapient beings is *histories*, thus Sapient beings rely on a conceptual history and discursive practices to determine their acts and their properness. When causes *interfere*, that is when they are in contradiction with the conceived histories, they are incorporated, histories change, but they are

nevertheless posited as histories, a collection of interrelated content, practices, and rules for navigation. Brandom escapes the teleological Aristotelian narrative of potentiality and actuality by following Hegel's retrospective (re-)construction. The normative vocabularies that Brandom emphasizes hold the potential of treating any contingency that we're not faced with *yet*. What must be elaborated is not a debunking of the normative vocabularies, but a structural treatment of discrepancies, which once elaborated deflate the strength of the normative vocabularies in capturing the subjective structure on which Sapiient beings are conceived. What is at stake is therefore an alternative subjective structure that actualizes Reason's potency by moving it beyond the reasons-causes dichotomy and theorize how on a structural basis the two relate. By espousing a homomorphism between the subjective deontic structure and the objective alethic structure, the problem of representation is bypassed, yet the Thought-Being dichotomy expresses more than the problem of representation, for being is not merely the *object of thought*, but its *other*, thus to articulate the relationship, what is needed is structuring the break of the homomorphism itself. The problem can now be put in terms of the relation between the *conceptual* the *non-conceptual*.

If the non-conceptual is internal to the conceptual then the non-conceptual is nothing but the discrepancy within the conceptual. However, the conceptual is already split into concept and object.²⁸ Although there is an attempt at making the concept correspond to the object, it is a correspondence in terms of coherence. To be expressivist about objects rather than realist is to

²⁸ In Kant, a further component is needed: intuition. This component drastically changes the structure: Because of intuition, we have to distinguish between phenomena and noumena. Intuition presupposes any conceptualized object. Although the object is not external as the empiricists have it, yet the object belongs to the phenomena for its intuitionist constitution. It is important to note here again that the intuition is not a given, for what is thought is already a synthesis of the manifold of intuitions, rather for Kant, it is anchored in formal transcendental conditions: Space and Time. In this sense, Kant confines the non-conceptual to transcendental conditions (they have no positive content) to experience and knowledge.

reject this correspondence and understand the relation in terms of a homomorphism between the subjective structure and the objective structure; the discrepancy therefore is that between the two structures (BH). To be a realist about objects is to assume the correspondence, yet crucially as idealist: the object is not the non-conceptual. Since the object is conceptualized, the object itself can be understood as nothing but the concept and the discrepancy. In other words, the object holds both the conceptual and the non-conceptual. This is a peculiar form of realism: a non-substantial realism. These two variants of idealism differ crucially on the relation of the non-conceptual with the conceptual. For the former, the non-conceptual guarantees conceptual dynamism; as for the latter, the non-conceptual guarantees temporal dynamism: the conceptual presupposes the non-conceptual. In Marx's terminology, the non-conceptual is the *material*.²⁹

B. On Contradiction

Our inquiry can be carried from the position of Contradiction, in fact contradictions are central to Hegel, Marx and Brandom. The first question can be posited as the following: What is the realm of contradictions? Is it Epistemology (Kant, Brandom)? Or ontology (Hegel and Marx on some readings)? Or can they not be located in either because they disturb the very boundary between Epistemology and Ontology (Hegel again on yet another reading)? This question is important, both for the methodological considerations we're after and the problematic we imposed under the heading of the Conceptual and the Non-Conceptual.

²⁹ Perhaps this would demystify Marx's matter. Read as 'non-substantial realist', Marx conceives of the object as holding both thought and matter.

It is well known that Dialectics has to do with contradiction. The relation is stated in such an ambiguity because it must be worked out, for there are stark differences in the articulation of this relationship. If Dialectics is *thinking through* contradictions, it leaves open the question of their realm. What is being in contradiction? Representations? Commitments? Entities? Whatever it is, on this view, we have either two representations or commitments or entities which are opposing each other. The first two are easy to comprehend, one can entertain two contradictory thoughts, or one can act against what s/he commits to. As for the third (entities), it is not clear what could be meant by contradictory entities. If contradictions are 'in the world', it could mean that a thing exists and does not exist at the same time. This position is implausible, not because it contradicts the law of non-contradiction, but because it is paralyzing. Since whatever is can only be accessed discursively, on the subjective level there is a commitment to what is and what is not at the same time. If the choice is then posited between an Epistemology of Contradiction and an Ontology of Contradiction, then obviously the first is to be taken more seriously. What is presented above is not an argument against an ontology of contradiction, it is merely a suggestion of its implausibility; this is sufficient since the position that will be argued for here is neither the seclusion of contradiction into epistemology nor its intrusion into ontology.

Since the non-conceptual has no content, and moreover, since it is part of the object rather than the subject (Kant), and crucially given Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism, matter cannot be formalized. To formalize matter is to substantialize it. The formalist detaches form from content, the price of this detachment however is to eternalize form; effectively it formalizes content. Therefore, even though the non-conceptual is non-contentful, it must be in a necessary relation with content. If the non-conceptual is part of the object, then it is in a necessary relation

with content. Furthermore, access to the non-conceptual cannot be made but through content. What is left is to determine how: If conceptual idealism is assumed, yet objective realism is argued for, what is needed is to think through contradiction: If what is is no longer separate from knowledge of it, yet it cannot be reduced to this knowledge because of the irreducibility of matter,³⁰ then contradiction in conceptual content is the ‘index of matter’.³¹

C. Exit BH, Enter Marx

Where is this inquiry heading? To think through contradiction is not to resolve contradiction, but to understand the disparity. For Brandom, when there is a contradiction between Geist and Nature, contradictions are resolved by committing to new judgements/representations. When there is a contradiction in Geist, when someone (some people) fail to act upon the commitments that *they already hold*, conceptually we search for causes, practically, we confess and forgive. In other words, to overcome the contradiction, there is both a theoretical and a practical effort. The Subject is a Hero, he takes responsibility for not acting upon *his* commitments, which are universal norms. When he does act upon his commitment, there are two choices, either his ‘attitudes’ and the norms are aligned, or he commits despite the attitudes. If there is a disparity, and his actions can be justified, it means there is an incoherence on the level of the conceptual: the conceptual is to be *blamed*. If his action cannot be justified (i.e. no

³⁰ It is crucial to clarify this point: The claim is not that there is something that defies conceptualization, but rather an insistence on an epistemological-ontological distinction. Contra Kant however, the distinction is not fixed: knowledge of what is entails a contribution from the subject’s part.

³¹ This is not to say that contradiction in conceptual content necessarily indexes *what* the non-conceptual *is*, for that would commit us to conferring a positive content on the non-conceptual by taking it as non-contradictory. Rather it is the claim that contradiction in conceptual content warns against dispensing with the non-conceptual.

contradiction is found at the level of the conceptual), he must bear the blame. To challenge this resolution is to challenge the *individuation of the blame*. This challenge rests on either of the following suggestions: 1) even if there is no contradiction on the level of the conceptual, this does not mean that it is not deficient (coherence without correspondence), or 2) that some contradiction on the level of the conceptual cannot be captured by reasons. Therefore, an alternative of the deontic structure and its relation to the alethic structure must be conceived:
Enter Marx.

CHAPTER IV: MARX, PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY

A. Introduction: Marx, Capital and Hegelian ‘Maturity’

1. *Which Marx?*

In dealing with Marx, many considerations arise. Should we deal with Marx *as* Philosopher? Or *as* Political theorist? Or *as* Revolutionary Communist? Or *as* Analyst of Political Economy? These demarcations are definitely problematic to be posited as such, for an argument of what is commensurable and incommensurable with what is needed. However, we do not start from scratch; many thinkers in the Marxist tradition or otherwise grappled with these questions, and a central debate took shape around the partition of Marx into the *early Marx* and the *mature Marx*. On some accounts, what separates the two cannot be over-emphasized, for it demarcates the move from *ideology* to *science*. In the words of Althusser, there is an *epistemological break* that separates the two. Althusser vehemently rejected the Hegelian influence on Marx, and saw his task as a Marxist was to explicate the *Materialist* position of Marx’s later work. Of course, when some context is introduced, things become more complicated. Althusser was reacting against a *humanist* reading of Marx and argued for a *structuralist* reading instead. On the other hand, theorists of the Frankfurt School were reacting against what they saw as a dogmatic overturning of Marx’s method into a Philosophy of Dialectical Materialism exemplified by the doctrine and practices of the Soviet Union. Put in a Hegelian context, Althusser was reacting against the overly subjectivist apprehension of Marx, while theorists of the Frankfurt School were reacting against an overly objectivist apprehension of Marx. In short, these theoretical battles were over the treatment of the Subject-Object pair in

Marx's method. By emphasizing Objectivity, Althusser sought to reclaim Marx's 'Materialist' position. On the other hand, in the Frankfurt School's emphasis on Subjectivity, they sought to reclaim Marx's 'Dialectical' Character.

These two varying Marxist stances must definitely be read in their contexts, yet they guide us in avoiding slips of disentangling or conflating the subject and the object. Moreover, this slippage is avoidable by giving the appropriate weight to both components of Marx's method: Materialism and Dialectics.

2. *What Works?*

Grundrisse captures Marx's attempt at formalizing (illustrating) the proper ('scientific') method in contradistinction with both political economists and Hegel. On the other hand, *Capital* signifies Marx's mature engagement with political economy. The plan for the multi-volume book is nothing short from the beginning of a Science. Given the immense manuscripts written by Marx, *Capital* Vol.1 is one of the few that were published during his life, signifying at least its completion as a book and therefore as a body of work. Marx's initial plan was to engage with *Capital* from different perspectives. The first of these is the position of a Commodity. A commodity as Marx explains in the first few pages of *Capital* is the simplest category that embodies *Capital*'s logic. It is through following the movement of the commodity that the study begins. Crucially, Marx warns his readers that the first chapters are the hardest, first for their abstractness, and second because of the form of presentation. Yet these chapters gained the most fame in terms of richness of content and continuing relevance, for they allegedly capture Marx's innovative methodology.

If this suggests why an engagement with these works is crucial to understand Marx's method, there is another aspect (obstacle/opportunity) in this endeavor, namely Capital's relation to Hegel's philosophy and particularly to Hegel's logic. The link was most famously captured by Lenin who said that "it is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic",³² and it is usually referred to based on a letter that Marx sent to Engels where he mentions the usefulness of Hegel's logic - which he accidentally reread - to the development of his work in *Grundrisse* and Subsequently *Capital*.³³ This presumed link is crucial to us in this work for it alludes to the continuity between Hegel and Marx. Moreover, the continuity is important for it could help us elaborate Marx's philosophical underpinnings. There is no better way to find a discontinuity between Hegel and Marx - and therefore a philosophical contribution on Marx's part - but to assume a continuity and focus on the differences. There's no harm if Marx's Capital turns out to be a Hegelian product, however, since we are attempting to make sense of 'materialist dialectics' which entails a break with 'idealist dialectics', it will be important to stay alert to the presumably materialist attitude/character (if not position) of his work.

3. Matter, Materialism, Materialist Dialectics

Let's start with the most troubling component in the Marxian Apparatus, namely his self-proclaimed Materialism. The question of Marx's relation to *matter* and therefore his method's engagement with *matter* is important. There is a lot of confusion when attempting to capture this

³² Vladimir Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks, Volume 38* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 213.

³³ Karl Marx, *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Collected Works, Volume 40: Letters 1856-59* trans. Peter and Betty Ross (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1982), 249.

relation. What kind of matter is Marx talking about? The caricatural depiction of the divide between Idealism and Materialism takes the first doctrine to give primacy to Thought while the other to Matter, or otherwise generalized as Spirit and Nature. However this depiction doesn't withstand scrutiny, for neither the Absolute Idealist nor the Dialectical Materialist dismisses one of the poles or treats it as mere effect of the other. Hegel's Spirit is not to be contrasted with Nature, nor is Thought for that matter to be contrasted with Matter. Or better put, if they are to be contrasted, it is only to dissect, retrieve distinctions and capture fundamental tensions. On this view, Marx's materialism cannot be contrasted as a philosophy against Hegel's idealism. Yet if the discontinuity between Hegel and Marx is to be retrieved, a useful dichotomy to posit would be between Hegel's phenomenology and Marx's materialism; and here the emphasis shifts to methodology. Before elaborating the hypothesized break, we could say preliminarily that Marx's materialism has nothing to do with matter, as long as the latter is understood in the domain of physical sciences and thus theorized empirically. If Marx's matter is not empirical, more importantly it must not be metaphysical. If Marx talks about the 'social substance' for instance, it is not because he extends substance to the social realm, rather it is precisely because he follows Hegel in the de-substantialization of substance. This is to say that the 'social substance' is not a metaphysical category but rather a theoretical entity that is meant to connect relations. If substance loses its metaphysical character, it is then subsumed under methodology. In the reading of Marx that we are suggesting, Marx's categories must not therefore be read as either metaphysical or empirical. Of course this only begs the question, what kind of categories are they? This is where a close reading of Marx as *Hegelian* becomes necessary.

4. *Exit Brandom, Enter Hegel*

Brandom's claim about the genealogical character of Marx's work rests on the picture according to which Marx envisions a systematic discrepancy between a *specific* set of contents and acts. What Marx reveals is an inclination to self-interested commitments and a distortion of commitments that would bind their holders to acts that they do not acknowledge. The believers that Marx is concerned with are the bourgeoisie.

The point of this investigation is to challenge this construal. Why and How? If Marx is 'properly dialectical' then no such sharp division between 'causally constituted beliefs' and 'normatively constituted beliefs' exists. The separation is indeed a genealogical work; however the claim is that no such dichotomy is suggested. If there is a dichotomy - and indeed there must be - it is internal rather than external, meaning that the divisions are theorized in order to account for the whole and to undermine the whole as such. If Capitalist social reality is a given, Marx's intervention is not to undermine its *reality* but rather its *givenness*. That is, Marx embarks on analyzing capitalist categories, irreducible as the economists want it to economy, nor translatable into sociology or even philosophy. The fusion of the different levels of analysis aim precisely at rejecting the 'myth of given'. In that sense, Marx's revolutionary attitude is not utopian, it does not start from a rejection of what *is* in the name of an ideal, rather it is the rejection of the necessity of what is, a rejection that can only be carried out on the basis of the analysis of what is; by capturing the fundamental antagonisms (real contradictions) that constitute the necessity and determinately negating what is (capitalism) based on these contradictions. In this sense, Marx's revolutionary aims can never be understood as an *escape from* capitalism, but rather as a transformation *from* Capitalism *to* Communism.

What is essential to the transformation is the abolition of private property. As the form of this abolition - and therefore its concrete replacement, it is not predetermined nor must there be only one form. If the ‘dictatorship of the proletariats’ as attempted in the 20th century failed, it only shows that this form of abolition failed, and calls for different attempts. This is not an attempt at absolving Marx from the failed (and horrific) experiments carried out in his name by protesting that “this is not real communism”, but rather an insistence that if one attempt fails, it is only an invitation for different attempts. The insistence on this transformation is reiterated not in a romantic refurbishing of Marx but rather in the actual contradictions in contemporary society, the first and last measure for ‘oughts’; their legitimacy and potency.

If the discussion so far considered the legitimacy of the revolutionary attitude, the focus must be now on its potency.

B. Methodology: Materialist Dialectics

1. Transcendental or Dialectical?

To articulate Marx’s method, we rely on both Kant and Hegel’s methodological approaches, where the former is captured by the notion ‘Transcendental’ and understood as the search for the ‘conditions of possibility of X’ where X is the object of inquiry, and the latter is captured by the notion ‘Dialectics’ and understood as the overcoming of the rigid distinction between form and content, an effort that attempts to escape any metaphysical grounding of Reason. It is crucial first to note that Dialectics is not in opposition to the Transcendental, rather it is its generalization/radicalization. By injecting conditions of possibility into all conceptual content, forming unities that hold internal contradiction, the transcendental is dynamized; it no

longer resides in a set of Categories that are eternal, final, and separate, but rather ones that are permeable to change both at the level of the conceptual (the realm of necessities) and at the level of the historical (the realm of contingencies). Therefore, if we imply that Marx's discovery is of a transcendental nature, it should by no means be read as bypassing Hegelian Dialectics. Yet, by reintroducing the 'transcendental', a certain fixation is proposed. It is here that the allusion to Kant becomes more relevant. Moreover, it is this fixation that is contended here. This fixation leads Brandom to consider Marx's work as genealogical.³⁴ However, the point of this chapter is to show that Marx's work operates first and foremost at the level of the conceptual; paradigmatically this is argued for by following Marx's formal analysis of Capital. Yet it is true that Marx could be read in opposition to Hegel on the terms of this very fixation. However as it will be argued for in the next few sub-sections, this does not remove Marx from Hegelian territories; a claim that has been carried many times through the juxtaposition of Marx's Capital and Hegel's Logic. The continuity is sometimes read in terms of a homology,³⁵ or on other accounts in terms of a 'heuristic analogy'.³⁶ For the sake of this work, and since the focus is first and foremost on Marx's method, this will be read in terms of Marx's relation to Dialectics. If, as has been mentioned earlier, fixation plays a central role in the distinction between Hegel and Marx on the one hand, and on Marx's departure from the realm of Philosophy to the critique of

³⁴ If Marx's Categories are transcendental, then a Hegelian critique of Kant applies: the categories are substantialized. Of course, the closer thinker that Brandom has in mind is Nietzsche and not Kant, for whatever transcendental conditions are retrieved, they are not deduced, but based on the suspicion towards conceptual content as such, while Kant is not suspicious of the conceptual content but of their *appropriate application* and thus their scope.

³⁵ See Christopher J. Arthur, *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

³⁶ See Roberto Finelli, "Abstraction versus Contradiction: Observations on Chris Arthur's *The New Dialectic and Marx's 'Capital'*," in *Historical Materialism* 15, no. 2 (2007): 61-74.

Political Economy on the other, then this fixation should help us in making the case of Marx's own *materialist* Dialectics. The question of fixation is therefore tightly linked with the materialist question. The insistence on this proclaimed 'materialist aspect' of Marx's work comes actually from the difficulty in the treatment of Marx's categories. If Marx's analysis is not empirical and if it does not lapse back into pre-Kantian metaphysics, and lastly if it does not *conform* with Hegelian Dialectics, then his proclaimed Materialism becomes the entry point in making sense of the kind of analysis he produces.

We have seen how Kant's transcendental conditioning of experience as such was transposed in BH's project into a relation between the implicit and the explicit. Reason no longer regulates and unifies the Understanding and its other (Sensibility) but rather became the dynamic core (the game of giving and asking for reasons) to which the understanding became equivalent to the mastery of conceptual use. In this construal, nothing is substantialized, whether conceptual (Categories) or otherwise (Forms of Sensibility), rather what is argued for is a holism where what is distilled (normative vocabularies) is nothing but the making explicit of what is already implicit in practices. Abstraction on this view is *clarificatory*, whereas any transformative potential must eventually reside on the level of material inferences, or to be closer to Brandomian account of Hegel, on the level of *conceptual content*. It might be misleading to say that in this account Abstraction is merely clarificatory; the point however is that although Abstraction contributes to the transformation, it is not however *necessary*. Material incompatibility could be captured at the level of content, and commitments adjusted accordingly. It is true that BH puts emphasis on the rupture between pre-modernity and modernity, considering that the in the latter stage we successfully transformed the status of content from the

natural to the normative, and as such created a gulf that separates us from this content (the non-identification with norms, alienation). Yet BH finds in the radicalization of this attitude a road to incoherence (as he understands it, this attitude leads to a form of *global genealogy*). It is then BH's recipe that a *mediated immediacy* must be *re-achieved* (post-modernity). In this sense, *mediation* is progressive, yet it eats itself unless it re-embraces *immediacy* on new grounds by precisely keeping this *mediating* ability.

Yet we see that the power of abstraction is celebrated by Marx, even though what we get from his remarks is only in terms of methodological considerations.³⁷ On the other hand, we have seen how method as such is impoverished and only leads to a formalist account on the Hegelian reading. Moreover, we have merely complained so far against a reading of Marx as a *local genealogist*, and by that same token embarked on providing a reading that escapes the trap of *globalizing the genealogy*. The initial suggestion is that Marx's work is *irreducible* to genealogy, and we here enter the attempt of capturing his methodology from the perspective of Abstraction. Kant is here with us yet again, for as will be contended in the following subsections, his argument for the transcendental conditions of experience could help us understand Marx's movement between different levels of analysis.

³⁷ In the Preface to the First Edition, Marx writes: "Beginnings are always difficult in all sciences... The value-form, whose fully developed shape is the money-form, is very simple and slight in content. Nevertheless, the human mind has sought in vain for more than 2,000 years to get to the bottom of it, while on the other hand there has been at least an approximation to a successful analysis of forms which are much richer in content and more complex. Why? Because the complete body is easier to study than its cells. Moreover, in the analysis of economic forms neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of assistance. The power of abstraction must replace both. But for bourgeois society, the commodity-form of the product of labour, or the value-form of the commodity, is the economic cell-form. To the superficial observer, the analysis of these forms seems to turn upon minutiae. It does in fact deal with minutiae, but so similarly does microscopic anatomy."

Before we delve in the articulation of the details of Marx's method, which we primarily read from the condensed exposition that Marx provides in the introduction to *Grundrisse*, specifically in the section entitled "The Method of Political Economy", we lay down the general picture.

Marx undermines what he calls the 'concrete-in-thought' in capturing reality. To determine what captures reality, the resort is to abstraction, abstraction from what is concrete-in-thought.³⁸ In that sense, one starts with what is 'given', and by abstracting from what is given, shows first the generality of the concrete-in-thought and then seeks the transcendental conditions for what is concrete-in-thought. What is transcendental is abstract. Why is it transcendental? it is a condition of possibility of the concrete-in-thought. To elucidate this, we can benefit here from the distinction between reality and the real. Reality is concrete-in-thought and substantialized (taken as self-evident, as given). The real is not substantial: the real is not separate from reality; it accounts for reality. The transcendental conditions are real in so far as they account for reality. What is concrete-in-thought does not account for reality. But what is it to 'account for reality'? By taking reality as given, phenomena are naturalized, on a more abstract level 'the is is

³⁸ If Marx celebrates abstraction, it is not however for the purpose of reduction. To abstract is to reduce, moreover we are *always already* engaged in abstraction. If there is no *given*, then the 'concrete in thought', which is taken as given, is nothing but conceptualized abstractions. In that sense, reality itself is a reduction. The 'charge' of reduction against Marx is usually understood in terms of *economic determinism*. Given our current reading, this charge has no basis, in fact, Marx's most basic moves rest on rejecting the *given*, whether that of philosophers (eternalizing a partial/distorted picture of individuals/ subjects/Geist) or that of political economists (eternalizing Capitalism by taking its 'laws' as *natural*).

eternalized', thus reality cannot be critiqued. By being suspicious of reality, the real can be retrieved through the contradiction in reality, thereby forcing oughts to be produced.³⁹

But why insist on the notion of reality? Why not treat it as a phenomenon? To do so in a Kantian manner is to force an empirical account, and if transcendental conditions are to be retrieved, they concern the Subject; they are therefore only subjective. Moreover, given that they are on a subjective level accounting for modes of thought in exclusion of the objective side, they are necessary and final. Marx is therefore closer to Hegel in blurring the rigid distinction between phenomena and noumena. In order to navigate, he relies on the subject-object pair. The transcendental conditions thus retrieved are neither solely subjective nor solely objective. They have both a subjective and an objective aspect.

We have two webs therefore, yet it is not a substantial duality, for the transcendental web is not external, it is part of the conceptual web. If we put that in terms of 'reality' and the 'real', we can say that what is real is not outside of reality, however, since reality is always mediated by thought, and since one is starting from the suspicion towards what is concrete-in-thought, the search for the real is the search for what is essential in reality, which the common-sensical mode of thought does not capture. The transcendental is subjective in so far as it controls/conditions the knower's access to reality, and it is objective in so far as it captures what is essential in this

³⁹ Oughts that are produced depend on contradictions in reality. The idea of contradictions in reality is not outrageous, for reality by now is not 'independent'. Reality is Consciousness's reality. Consciousness' reality is neither Kant's phenomena nor some crude realism. Moreover Consciousness' reality cannot be simply treated as what consciousness *takes as* reality and thus encloses it in Epistemology for the co-dependence of *for consciousness* and *in-itself*. It is only when we insist on an absolute notion of reality that these dilemmas arise, and the trap is of course that this very attempt falls back into metaphysics. Indeed it is this absolutization of reality that we're attempting to avoid through the Marxian critique. The tension between Hegel and Marx revolves around this question: Can one avoid the absolutization of reality from the position of Self-Consciousness? And if not, how can one demarcate what is to be taken as a position of Self-Consciousness and what is not?

reality. The distinction between the *real* and *reality* is helpful, for the latter is substantialized, while the former is *relational*. Whatever concepts Marx advances, they are concrete in so far as they play this essential role, they are merely abstract universals in so far as they are not expressed in terms of their *relation* to what is concrete-in-thought, which is capitalist reality. Our next step is to distill what has been sketched so far from Marx's critique of the method of political economy.

2. Concrete-for-Political-Economists: Concrete-as-such

Whereas philosophers are troubled by the kind of relation between thought and reality, political economists bypass this problematic by simply ignoring it. If the thought—reality distinction is not relevant, then any conception of what is concrete is taken as concrete as such. Political economists start with what is 'concrete-as-such'. This means that the starting point of the study needs no revision, it is rather the ontological benchmark onto which political economic theories compete. To begin with, the simplest question is the following: If access to being is immediate, what is the role of abstraction? If abstraction extends knowledge, this means that there is something to know beyond what is 'concrete-as-such'. In abstracting from the 'concrete-as-such', political economists distill fewer and simpler determinations. These abstract determinations are then used to build economic models applicable to everything that is concrete-as-such. The concrete-as-such is pre-theoretical, unified through theory in key abstract concepts, applied to everything that is pre-theoretical. To subscribe only to what is concrete-as-such is to treat all phenomena as natural. The Political Economists' position is paradoxical. The abstractions they derive and the 'laws' they 'discover' are natural, yet what they take as natural

(concrete-as-such) is insufficient: naturalistic explanations end up producing abstract determinations to explain what is natural and immediate. Marx's suspicion is grounded in this: the concrete-as-such cannot be an Archimedean point; to treat it as an absolute beginning is to end the investigation.

Marx critiques rather than rejects the work of Political Economists. Contrary to the typical work of criticism that rejects the premises on which a whole theoretical body is conceived, Marx begins where the Political Economists begin: with "the real and concrete, with the real precondition...the population, which is the foundation and the subject of the entire social act of production".⁴⁰ Marx concedes this starting point, without however granting it an absolute status. The political economists, while they do not accept this skepticism about the starting point, yet effectively in their act of thinking undermine this starting point, for "on closer examination... the population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed".⁴¹ This much, the political economists do without undermining the starting point; but rather, "by means of further determinations, [they] move analytically towards even more simple concepts".⁴² The act is therefore conceived as the unfolding of the whole's parts: out of population, abstract determinations such as 'class', or even more abstract ones such as 'exchange-value' are all derived from the ontological benchmark: the concrete-as-such. The method of political economists consist of these steps: start with the concrete-as-such (population), unpack its parts (from the less abstract (e.g. class), to the more abstract (e.g.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London, England: Penguin Group, 1993), 100.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 100.

exchange-value)), use these parts to construct more complex models (e.g. exchange between states). In this understanding, *mediation* is imposed on the *immediate* in order to understand what is immediate yet complex (the world market is immediate yet complex, population is immediate yet simple). This weird formulation of a “simple immediate” and a “complex immediate” is the price of not challenging the immediate (the starting point). Moreover, it is a price for it necessitates explanation: How to differentiate between complex and simple? We can no longer rely on mediation to explain the complexity. As a result, Political economists conceive of both “population” and “exchange between states” as natural (having the same ontological status) and unmediated by thought even though finding their abstract determinations necessitates thinking.

3. Kant, Hegel, Marx

Rather than starting with the ‘concrete-as-such’, Marx advances the notion of the ‘concrete-in-thought’. In using the ‘concrete-in-thought’ however, Marx is not merely pointing to the contribution of thought in shaping the object nor it being only concrete *for thought*. Crucially the notion points to *in-thought* rather than *of-thought* or *for-thought*. In this sense, neither Kant’s *phenomena* nor Hegel’s *for consciousness* capture Marx’s point. In the most general terms, we can say that it is not Kant’s *phenomena* because it is not *all* we can know; and it is not Hegel’s *for consciousness* because Marx does not concur with Hegel about the *kind* of relation obtaining between ‘consciousness’ and ‘things’. Marx attempts to preserve the distinction between

‘thought’ and ‘consciousness’ *without* substantializing it.⁴³ In this sense, Marx’s ‘object’ is neither empirical (Kant), nor part of consciousness’s experience (Hegel). The clear challenge is not falling back into (pre-Kantian) metaphysics. If Marx is following Kant’s insight about the conditioning of the conceptual by the non-conceptual, yet aligns himself with Hegel’s critique of substance, then Marx’s ‘object’ must not be a substance. Marx understands these insights by thinking of *relations*. Of course, even relations can be substantialized,⁴⁴ Hegel already deals with this slippage in his critique of the Fichtean I’s self-relation. Hegel’s wager against Fichte is the *indeterminacy* of the ‘obstacles’ that prevents this self-relation from falling into a formal identity (“I = I”). Thinking of relations must deal with determined content in order to escape substantialization. In this sense, Marx’s ‘object’ must be in a necessary relation to determined content to escape substantialization. The Hegelian question is then: Is it possible to conceive of an object/relation that is in a necessary relation to determined content without including the object in consciousness’ experience? And the Kantian question is: Is it possible to conceive of a *formless* and *contentless* transcendental condition? As I will argue next, to answer these questions, Marx decouples thought-reality from epistemology-ontology. In other words, the

⁴³ The claim here is that Kant substantializes the distinction yielding the two distinct mutually exclusive realms: transcendental and empirical. ‘Thought’ is in this understanding the subjective transcendental conditions, and ‘consciousness’ is empirical (Descartes’ ‘I’). On the other hand, claiming that Marx contra Hegel wants to preserve the distinction, does not mean that Hegel collapses the normative into the psychological. Hegel’s consciousness is *not* psychological. On the contrary, Hegel is radicalizing Kant’s idealism. In this sense, if Marx is suspicious towards Hegel’s treatment of consciousness, it is because of its *ideality* rather than its *materiality*. In other words, Marx is suspicious to the alignment of ‘consciousness’ with ‘thought’.

⁴⁴ Perhaps, this is the reading that takes Marx to be claiming that *all that is* are social relations or class struggle. Marx’s polemical writings invite these readings, yet the claim here is that Marx can be read as a ‘non-substantial realist’.

distinction between *thought* and *reality* in Marx is not - although necessarily related to (and this relation must be explicated) - that between epistemology and ontology.

4. *Object-of-thought, object-for-thought, object-in-thought*

Central to Marx's work is the distinction between 'concrete-in-thought' and what we can call 'concrete-in-reality'. In this sub-section we're after the specificity of this distinction. The wager is that the distinction does not correspond to neither Kant's phenomena—noumena nor Hegel's for-consciousness—in-itself. Furthermore, both Kant and Hegel's distinctions are indispensable to formulate Marx's distinction.

In the simplest construal, thought is abstract, being is concrete. If thought conceptualizes being, it abstracts from what is concrete: being. I will use 'object' instead of 'concrete' to avoid confusion, and will reintroduce the distinction at the end. Subsequently, to speak of an *object-in-thought* is to doubt the objectivity of that which is thought.

In a Kantian register, if something is an object-in-thought yet not an object-in-reality then it is merely an *object-for-thought* (God for instance, which could have a practical but not a theoretical grounding). The most basic judgment is that thought erred. What is taken *as* an object-in-reality turns out to be merely an object-in-thought. What is needed is a readjustment of that which is conceptualized: a new representation (*object-of-thought*). Therefore, if an object-in-thought does not correspond to an object-in-reality (phenomenal objects in Kant), then the thought is not a representation: the object-in-thought is *not* an *object-of-thought*.

In a Hegelian register, the relation between thought and being is more complex. Thought and being are immanent to representation. Hegel's relation is to be understood as a movement.

Consciousness posits an object, only to discover that it is mediated by it (the concept is included in the object). It therefore determinately negates itself based on the discrepancy between the concept and the object, producing a new concept and a new object. The initial object (the object-in-thought) is the object-in-reality; upon the 'identification', the initial object (no longer object-in-thought) is both an object-for-thought and an object-of-thought; their discrepancy becoming an object-in-reality, so that the new object (the object-in-thought) is the object-in-reality. What is immediate in Hegel undergoes transformation.⁴⁵

Lastly, in a Marxian register, although thought and reality are not separate, epistemology and ontology are. The wager then is that the two can be decoupled. To first state the suggestion: It is only when the object-of-thought (representation) *intersects* with the object-for-thought (concept) that the object-in-thought is the object-in-reality. It is perhaps crucial here to revert from 'object' to 'concrete'. 'Concrete' in Marx *preserves* Kant's sensibility. A representation in Kant is a synthesis of a manifold of intuitions. A representation in Marx is a synthesis of *abstract determinations*. Although Marx does not revert to Kant's 'intuition', he however reverts to the presupposition of representation: A representation is conditioned by the non-conceptual.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Hegel's treatment of this issue is clear in the first shape of consciousness: Sense-Certainty. Before Consciousness recognizes that what is 'concrete-as-such' could turn out to be 'concrete-for-thought', Consciousness assumes immediacy. In contemporary vocabulary, the object of thought is taken as given. This very formulation points to the problem, for in so far as being is an object of thought, it cannot be immediate, the object is mediated by thought. To put it in a bolder form: It is an object in virtue of thought thinking it. The immediacy in Hegel is exemplary in indexicals such as 'this', 'here' and 'now'. What is revealed in this study of the experience of consciousness is that 'this' is a contribution from thought. This points us first to its abstractness. Moreover, what is more crucial is that 'this' is revealed as an empty abstraction: Without a predicate, 'this' points to nothing. 'this' which is supposed to point to what is concrete and particular, turn out to be abstract and universal. 'this' needs further determinations in order to point as such. Hegel's point is not to reject these notions as empty abstraction, but rather point to necessary mediation that makes any 'immediate notion' possible. Rather than it being immediate, being (that which is) turns out to be the residue of Consciousness' mediation.

⁴⁶ Forms of sensibility in Kant, the material in Marx.

Crucially however, this presupposition in Marx is not a pure form, otherwise it would be substantialized. Since this representation is the synthesis of *abstract* determination, that is, a synthesis of conceptual content, it is neither immutable nor absolute. Yet, it is not subjectively transformed by recognizing it as a misrepresentation. Marx claims that the concrete-in-thought must be *reproduced*; however, this reproduction generates a new *kind* of object, an internally contradictory object: a representation (object-of-thought) and a concept (object-for-thought) that do not correspond, but intersect. In the example he gives in discussing the method of political economists (which I will go through in detail below), the initial-concrete-in-thought ‘population’ is reproduced as ‘society’. The concrete-in-thought-reproduced is the intersection of ‘population’ and ‘totality of social relations’. In other words, conceptually ‘society’ is the totality of social relations, concretely it is a population.

‘Concrete-in-thought’ therefore points to both: the contribution of thought to that which is ‘concrete-in-reality’ and a restriction on thought in so far as the mediation is non-deliberate. The difference between Hegel and Marx’s treatment is crucial. While for Hegel what is ‘concrete-in-reality’ is *always already* ‘concrete-in-thought’, it nevertheless holds a certain concreteness-in-reality, albeit as a residue; i.e. a mediated immediacy. On the other hand, Marx’s more radical claim is that concreteness-in-thought does not guarantee any concreteness-in-reality. We could also say, it is an “immediate mediation”. Stated as such, the tenor seems Kantian: A wrong representation represents nothing. However, the suggestion is more peculiar. While Kant

separates wrong representations (null) from correct representations (complete)⁴⁷, and Hegel reconnects the two (every representation is misrepresentation; every misrepresentation is a representation)⁴⁸, which renders every representation partial⁴⁹ (which necessitates in Hegel the move from the Understanding to Reason), Marx insists on the boundaries between epistemology and ontology without separating thought and reality. The dualism generated is formal: A dualism between concrete-*in-thought* and abstract-*in-thought*, rather than a substance dualism between abstract-*in-thought* and concrete-*in-reality*.⁵⁰

5. Synthesis-of-relations, Relation-of-relations, Thing

To put things in perspective, it would be helpful to re-invoke the classical representationalist position: To reject the rigid dichotomy between ‘concrete-as-such’ (reality)

⁴⁷ The suggestion is more complex. While indeed Kant distinguishes between Thought and Knowledge (to think something is not to know it; to know anything it would be a correct representation), what is abstracted from that which is thought yet does not represent are the transcendental conditions. In other words, ‘wrong representations’, although represent nothing, they inform us about the structure of thought. This formulation exposes Kant’s separation between the empirical and the transcendental. What is represented belongs to the phenomena, it thus is empirical.

⁴⁸ This formulation points to the tension with Transcendental philosophy: a representation either deals with Nature or Spirit and as such it is always a misrepresentation, for every representation represents both Nature and Spirit. The same holds for a misrepresentation: rather than moving from the empirical to the transcendental (understanding the structure of thought), a misrepresentation represents both Nature and Spirit.

⁴⁹ It turns out then that partiality is a feature of the Understanding, precisely because the Understanding only deals with objects.

⁵⁰ We could also say that Marx endorses the Hegelian philosophical point of view, yet reads Kant non-philosophically. A Hegelian (phenomenological) reading of Kant points to the impasse of the Kantian philosophy, the defect that yields the impasse, and as such moves Philosophy beyond this impasse. A non-philosophical reading of Kant fixates on this: the Understanding is compelled to complete representations. While this is captured by the phenomenologist, it is determinedly negated: new shape of consciousness is conceived. The fixation depends on Marx’s object of thought: Political Economy. While Hegel’s Logic points to the determined negation of the Understanding, Marx attends to the historical: whether you can logically determinately negate the ‘understanding’ that does not yield a historical transformation by default.

and ‘abstract-as-such’ (thought) is not to conflate the two. ‘Something’ is more or less concrete (less or more abstract). This points to the necessary relation between ‘something’ and other things: Something is more or less concrete (less or more abstract) in relation to something else. However, is this enough, what is the measure? From what position is something more or less concrete in relation to other things?

a. Synthesis-of-relations as Relation-of-relations

If what is concrete-in-thought is a synthesis of abstract determination (a synthesis of relations), the crucial question becomes the following: Is the synthesis of relations a relation? If the ‘concrete’ is itself ‘abstract’ (a relation of relations), one simply shifts from crude materialism to crude idealism.⁵¹ If it is assumed to be (i.e. if the concrete is assumed to be a relation of relations) then what is ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract’ are determined solely in relation to each other. Without introducing a “third element” (in-thought/in-reality), concreteness/abstractness can be measured only in terms of the centrality of a relation: How many relations is this ‘relation’ in relation with? An ‘ideal observer’ (which the political economist strives to be) conceives of the totality of relations and points to the most concrete relation and the least concrete. Yet, the ‘ideal observer’ cannot conceive of the change in the relations between relations. What the ‘ideal observer’ perceives is a catalog of totalities, but not how these totalities relate.

To derive relations from what is ‘concrete-as-such’ is to *effectively* treat it as a relation. If ‘in-thought’ is missed, what is assumed is that what is ‘concrete-in-thought’ is a relation-of-

⁵¹ Political economists are neither merely ‘crude materialists’ nor merely ‘crude idealists’. These two positions are unattainable. While political economists start with ‘concrete-as-such’ (seemingly crude materialism), effectively they treat the concrete-in-thought as abstract: In order to derive relations, the starting point must be a relation. (effectively an amalgam of materialism and idealism).

relation(s): a presupposing of relation(s).⁵² In the example that Marx gives, ‘Population’ would be the relation-of-relation(s) for political economists. In other words, any relation that the political economists “derive” is in relation to Population. ‘Class’ for instance is a relation that is more abstract than ‘population’ and is in a necessary relation to ‘population’.⁵³ ‘Exchange-value’ is a relation more abstract than ‘class’. Marx says that political economists reach the simplest (abstract) relations such as ‘exchange-value’, then “use it” to model economic relations, for instance, exchange-between-states. ‘State’ is a relation, therefore what political economists theorize are relations-between-relations.

Marx claims that once these most-abstract-relations are retrieved we have to go back to **reproduce** the concrete-in-thought (to re-produce is to produce a new object). Assume we concede to this, how is tracing back to the concrete-in-thought a re-production and not a circular move? Something in the process of ‘descending from the concrete to the abstract’ must undermine the initial-concrete-in-thought precisely in terms of its status as a relation-of-relation(s). Here is the problem: Any relation (any object of thought) is a relation of at least one relation (it relates to at least one other relation, conditions it and is conditioned by it); thus any starting point is both appropriate and inappropriate: appropriate because every relation is a relation-of-relation(s), and inappropriate since it is arbitrary precisely because every relation is a relation-of-relation(s) (Marx speaks of a “chaotic representation of the whole”). Once one

⁵² Thus political economists assume ‘population’ as an ultimate presupposition of all other simpler (more abstract, less connections) relations.

⁵³ Necessary both because without this relation it cannot be compared to ‘population’ and because ‘population’ presupposes ‘class’. These are not separate conditions. Any relation is constituted based on its relations, in other words, any relation that it is in relation with both presuppose it and is presupposed by it.

descends, i.e. moves, from the presupposed relation to find relations presupposed by this relation, one reaches the most-abstract-relations (relations with the least number of connections). These relations are indistinguishable from the starting point (concrete-in-thought), but in terms of the number of relations that they presuppose (again, this follows if the ‘concrete’ is not treated as concrete-in-thought and subsequently to make any derivation is treated as a relation of relations). To clarify this point: assume for simplicity’s sake that ‘population’ (concrete-in-thought) is a relation of 10 relations, moreover, assume that after the descent we reach ‘exchange-value’ which is a relation of 15 relations. Without comparing (in terms of concreteness/abstractness) ‘population’ and ‘exchange-value’, it would still be assumed that what is concrete-in-thought is concrete-in-reality, even though the process of thinking itself reveals that what is concrete-in-thought as a starting point is more-abstract than what is abstract-in-thought as a result.⁵⁴ This reveals two things: First that what is concrete-in-thought is not necessarily concrete-in-reality, and second that this process of reproducing the concrete-in-thought must be repeated, for even though the totality is potentially knowable, the totality is not static.⁵⁵ This is crucial, for it is not an empirical claim. We must presuppose that the totality is not static, otherwise the process of thinking itself is impossible. On the other hand, and perhaps ironically, we must *suspend* time in order to think.

⁵⁴ Note that it is not necessary that the result of the political economist is the most-concrete, other relations in the descent could be the most-concrete.

⁵⁵ It is here perhaps that Marx critiques Hegel, by insisting on repetition. Although Hegel mediates the concrete-in-thought, once he does, rather than repeat the process of thought, grant this movement to the concept (relation). In that sense, Marx accuses Hegel of substantializing the concept. Yet, what is both interesting and peculiar is that Marx fixates on Capital. The claim is then that either - upon repetition of the process - ‘Capital’ is reproduced as the concrete-in-thought, or that ‘Capital’ has a different status.

b. Synthesis-of-relations as a thing

To sum up before we elaborate on this second suggestion: the concrete-in-thought is concrete-in-reality if the abstract-in-thought and the concrete-in-thought intersect. But the abstract-in-thought must be produced. After this production, the concrete-in-thought is reproduced. The concrete-in-thought that is concrete-in-reality is the reproduced-concrete-in-thought.

The initial-concrete-in-thought appears as concrete-as-such. When it is thought, it reveals itself as a synthesis of abstract determination. The initial-concrete-in-thought is not concrete in virtue of its correspondence to reality; it is concrete solely in terms of its immediacy which does not guarantee correspondence. Thinking deals with all categories as relations. ‘Concrete’ and ‘abstract’ are therefore understood for thought only in terms of the centrality of a category: a category is concrete if it relates to (presupposes and is presupposed by) more relations in comparison to another category. Thought therefore gives no privilege to any starting point (category); any starting point would lead to the unveiling of a whole web of relations. Furthermore, if there is an end, it rests on the assumption that the web is static: all relations keep their status (abstract/concrete) in relation to each other. Paradoxically however, thinking happens in time: In order to explore the web of relations, it needs time.

Interestingly however, Marx speaks of an ‘ascent from the abstract to the concrete’. It is an ascent from the most-abstract-in-thought to the initial-concrete-in-thought. If the mission is only to undermine the concreteness of the concrete-in-thought (that the initial-concrete-in-thought is not concrete-in-reality), this is done with the first steps of ‘descent’ where the initial-concrete-in-thought is revealed as abstract. On the other hand, if we settle for a relative

(relational) ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract’, we don’t have to ascend to the initial-concrete-in-thought but to point to the most relationally concrete category discovered in the descent. The question is then, why the ascent?

To insist on the ascent suggests that Marx preserves a certain ‘weight’ for the initial-concrete-in-thought. The initial-concrete-in-thought plays an essential role in knowing the concrete-in-reality. Certainly, by undermining the concreteness of the concrete-in-thought, Marx does not want to substantialize the concrete-in-thought. Moreover, paradoxically, the concrete-in-thought is sensible (the common-sensical ‘real’), yet also a synthesis of abstract determinations: the ‘sensible’ is a result of thinking. Put differently: The immediate is a result of mediation. The problem is: How is the result of thinking sensible? In Kant, the problem is solved by introducing *intuition*. A representation is a result of the synthesis of a manifold of intuitions. Marx can’t be unproblematically appealing to Kant’s understanding of representation, for that would commit him to the correctness of this representation; yet Marx denies the concreteness of this representation. If we wanted to benefit from Kant’s understanding of representation, we could say that a representation holds a conceptual and a non-conceptual part. Yet, the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual is not straightforward, for again it is a synthesis of abstract determinations for Marx. This is to say that the ‘non-conceptual’ part is not an entity. The non-conceptual could point to the irreducibility of the concept of the concrete-in-thought. In other words, the synthesis of relations is *not* a relation. While the product of the conceptual *must* be conceptual, it is rather sensible. The sensible points therefore to the failure of the conceptual to fully determine its result. Rather than being the residue of mediation, the immediate is the gap in mediation. While it is a ‘gap’, it is also the guarantee of not conflating thought and reality (“I

think it, it exists”), a break already handled by Kant. Yet, contra Kant, Marx’s representation is not treated as a result (correct) but as a starting point (condition for correctness). Rather than substantializing the concrete-in-thought, Marx treats it as presupposition, a presupposition that is reproduced. Its ‘reproduction’ guarantees its correspondence to the concrete-in-reality. But here again why? If thought is to access reality, it must attend to its impasse, not as a given, but as a presupposition. As a result, the initial-concrete-in-thought is an abstraction from the reproduced-concrete-in-thought. But what is the reproduced-concrete-in-thought?

c. Concrete-in-thought-reproduced as a thing *and* a relation

To lay down the suggestion, we can benefit from Brandom’s inferential theory of concept formation. Relying on Brandom’s work also helps us in revealing the ‘theoretical tension’ between Brandom and Marx. This effort will be reiterated in the next section to capture the ‘practical tension’ between the two. We start by a hypothetical construal of concept formation to elucidate the point: one starts with a *democratic* distribution of normative forces, upon navigation, asymmetries start to hold. The hierarchy resulted (never final as long as there’s navigation) is understood in terms of the different privileges that concepts have. Further, this ‘privilege’ expresses the centrality of certain concepts and the marginality of others. The marginal concepts are easier to sacrifice (less dramatically, to dispense with), they don’t *shake* the whole of the conceptual apparatus. Central concepts are conserved, and if several tensions arise, they are revised. Overthrowing central concepts disintegrates the foundations of the conceptual apparatus. The overthrow either *reboots* or *revolutionizes* the conceptual apparatus. The first is impossible, for there is no start, the start is merely hypothetical. Without the

centrality for certain concepts there is paralysis, otherwise all routes of navigation would be equally valid. Hypothetically this might sound unproblematic, in practice this means that “starving to death” or “not starving to death” are equally plausible. The second postulates a new conceptual hierarchy. Paradoxically however, it must rely on the existing conceptual apparatus for the postulation. If central concepts are the target, then either 1) the central concepts must immanently be transformed (reshuffling the inferential articulation of these concepts) or 2) an intensification of the inferential articulation of marginal concepts must be operated or 3) a new conception of concepts/objects is conceived. Regarding (1), the suggestion is inconceivable from a Brandomian perspective: The legitimacy of the concepts is nothing but the strength of their inferential articulations. Moreover, the suggestion is also inconceivable from a Marxist perspective for the immediacy of mediation. As for (2), it is a legitimate move from a Brandomian perspective: this shift of centrality follows the inferentialist theory. On the other hand, the suggestion seems implausible for Marx: it presupposes the sufficiency of the game of giving and asking for reasons, however Marx is undermining the anchoring of legitimacy in the doxastic commitments of members of the community, for his explanation breaks the community in terms of the members’ social (class) relations. In other words, members of the community are not expected to drastically reshape their forms of life by reconfiguring the whole of the conceptual apparatus. Lastly (3) is a suggestion that is inconceivable from the Brandomian perspective for it runs against the conception of the homomorphism between the deontic and the alethic structures. Brandom relies on the coherence between the two structures and the isolation (cataloguing) of misrepresentations. To conceive of a new concept (or object) is to challenge the structural homology between concepts and objects. On the other hand, this seems to be the

direction of Marx's suggestion. Specifically, misrepresentations prompt Marx to posit a new object rather than new representations. To clarify the difference: while a representation is a representation of an object, 'representation' is distinct from the 'object': representation holds both 'concept' and 'object'. A new representation is a representation of a *different* object, this necessitates a certain process on the side of the concept. A new object is a new *form* of object where the initial form is representation. That is to say, the new object is *unrepresentable*.⁵⁶ What is the role of representation? Since the new object defies representation, and yet representation is irreducible to the new object (Hegel attempts the reduction?), representation becomes the discrepancy *within* the concept: the new object is the concept *and* its discrepancy (representation). While the common-sensical mode of thought cannot but conceive of empirical

⁵⁶ Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the object is not *fully representable*. An empirical study can always be conjoined with Marx's analysis, yet this analysis is inconceivable empirically.

objects (full representations of consistent and unified objects), the theoretical mode of thought conceives of objects that hold contradictions.⁵⁷

6. Materialism: Pure Science, Science in Ideology, Science in necessary relation to Ideology

What we are trying to get to is an understanding of ‘boundaries that are negotiable’. The boundaries set the division between the Logical and the Historical. The boundaries are negotiable because they change: the Logical and the Historical are not separate, yet they are not conflated. To think logically but not historically is to miss the historical constitution of the logical. To think historically but not logically is to miss the logical constitution of the historical. The critique of

⁵⁷ In *Capital*, Marx begins with the analysis of commodity, for “the wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” its unit being a single commodity.” This analysis quickly splits into two questions: *what is the substance of commodity?* and *what is the form of commodity?* Marx’s first few pages in *Capital* explores these questions. By starting with the second question (the form), Marx finally reaches the substance of commodity. What is the form of commodity? Commodity here is not a particular commodity but commodity in general. Marx starts with two factors of a commodity, its use-value and its exchange-value. The use-value is the usefulness of a commodity, this must be a particular commodity, and thus use-value is first and foremost the *qualitative* aspect of a commodity. The exchange-value is necessarily related to other commodities, and the equivalences made do not depend on the qualitative aspect; the exchange-value is first and foremost *quantitative*. Yet, the fact that we can equate two commodities without recourse to use-value (which captures its materiality as well, for usefulness depends on the physicality of the object), means that there is a common ‘substance’ that both commodities share. This ‘something in common’ cannot be material, therefore it is *value*. So, two commodities share value. Thus value is the substance of a commodity, it has two forms: use-value and exchange-value, the first is qualitative, the second is quantitative. Then Marx looks at another aspect of commodity: labor. For there to be a commodity at all, labor is involved. So the investigation now focuses on labor. Marx again splits labor into the *quantitative* and the *qualitative*. The first is abstract-labor or socially necessary labor time, the second is use-labor. Use-labor captures the different kinds of work, its heterogeneity. The socially necessary labor time capture the average time to produce something in a specific society.

Put in terms of the exposition of Marx’s objects, we can understand these ‘movements’ as the search for objects that hold contradictions (commodity-form/commodity, abstract-labor/concrete-labor, money-form/money...), in this understanding, rather than *deriving* the abstract (i.e. value) from the concrete (e.g. labor) as for instance the labor theory of value suggests, Marx understands the ‘concrete’ as the gap in the ‘abstract’: commodity as object has both an abstract (relational) and concrete (substantial) aspect, its abstract aspect understood in terms of the relation of a commodity with other commodities, its substantial aspect is its representation, the sensible commodity. Far from being derived from its concrete constitution, a commodity is a commodity in virtue of its relation to other commodities, yet a commodity cannot exist without its concrete constitution. The ‘concrete’ is a discrepancy in the ‘abstract’ because it makes it impossible for the commodity to be fully determined abstractly (relationally). Moreover, this discrepancy guarantees against a metaphysics of Capital.

the latter is already in Kant. The critique of the former is the critique of Kant. Although the mutual constitution of the Historical and the Logical is in Hegel, the divergence in Marx is in term of the articulation of this intertwinement. In this sense, Hegel and Marx are philosophically aligned. Yet this divergence has a philosophical ramification. This does not necessarily prompt a Marxist Philosophy however, for the articulation of this intertwinement could posit limits to the philosophical endeavor itself. Limits here no longer mean the terms of its appropriate domain; rather limits point to the historical constitution of Philosophy itself. This would allow a suspicion towards Philosophy which can be read as complicit with what is: not because it is not aware of this constitution, but rather because this constitution is irreducible.

If Marx's work is Logical rather than Historical, it attends to what is historical. For Marx, England is the *exemplary* model on which Capital is conceived. That does not mean that Capital *applies* only to England, for Marx is trying to capture something that is not *merely* empirical. The 'Logic of Capital', wherever and whatever its origin, is *effective*, whether in 19th Century England or other European countries where it was becoming dominant. To say that Marx's work is *logical* is to say in one sense that he is after the *status* of Capital rather than its *origin*. But this is still ambiguous. The question is: What role does the *empirical* play in Marx's work? In so far as we follow his exposition, the empirical is the starting point. 'Facts' and 'concrete objects' are taken as *given*. From there, the study does not proceed in determining whether the facts are really facts or whether concrete objects are really concrete. This would have been an empirical investigation. Rather, following a tradition of German rationalists, Marx treats the empirical as impoverished: What is 'concrete' is *concrete-in-thought*. Marx does not *trust* Consciousness' apprehension. Yet he understands that any investigation of something 'beyond' what

Consciousness takes to be the case *must* take this apprehension into account. In other words, rather than dismissing what consciousness takes to be the case in the name of a 'higher truth', Marx attempts to *make sense* of this very apprehension. In this sense, Marx does not assume to have discovered a new position from which Truth as it is is accessible, but rather his position must be understood in terms of its relation to what is *for consciousness*. To put it in general terms, Marx is not an *empirical realist* attempting to *correct* what we take *is* to be, nor is he an *idealist* accepting that the position of consciousness is a legitimate one. He is as he claims a *materialist*, which must be understood in terms of this *relative* position to consciousness: the mistrust of *for consciousness*, and the awareness that any explanation *beyond* consciousness must be formal (for this is precisely the suspicion towards what is 'concrete in thought'). Yet this very explanation is also an interpretation, it includes the *for consciousness*, both at the general level, which encompasses the collective assumptions of disciplines such as Philosophy and Political Economy, and at the level of the specific, taking into account that it is *his own position*, that is, there is no *ultimate* position beyond consciousness.

These issues are usually discussed in the Marxist tradition in terms of *ideology* and *science*. A scientific work is that which provides an *objective explanation*. Careful Marxists understood that they cannot claim this absolute position given the *inevitable* necessary constitution of the subject: Ideology. Their attempts therefore proceeded in attempting to make Ideology and Science coincide. In this understanding, everything is ideological, but part of what is ideological is scientific. What is suggested here is considerably different. Rather than proclaim that 'everything is ideological', what is contended is that 'everything is susceptible to becoming ideological'. In other words, Consciousness' *givens* are not to be *trusted*; however, before

determining exactly *why* the specific givens are abstract/wrong/false...they cannot be declared ideological. In this sense, if we follow the lingo of the Marxists, the scientific is *not* a subset of the ideological. Rather for every *judged* set of content as ideological, there *must be* another set of content that *explains* this set; moreover, it cannot be assumed that the proposed set is necessarily non-ideological. Perhaps, given this provision, one can conceive different *degrees* of ideology rather than rigidly exclusive or inclusive sets. In other words, some content can be *more* or *less* ideological. Moving away from ideology is the act of *de-substantializing*; the further Marxist effort is therefore further de-substantialization: more and more concrete determinations, through a logical unfolding of categories that we *already hold*. This position cannot be Consciousness' position, for Consciousness *must* substantialize in order to 'navigate in the world'. If this is so, then Marx's position is primarily theoretical, and therefore there is no easy translation of this position into practice. To 'de-substantialize in practice' is to substantialize *better*. 'Better' here means being informed by the theory. Far from leading to Dogma, to be informed by theory is to first acknowledge that one is *always already* informed by theory, and therefore rather than proclaim a moderate position, a position that is transient – for in so far as it does not challenge core theoretical foundations, it is irrelevant to be moderate – it is further *indulgence* in theory, an indulgence that acknowledges that in further theorizing there is no guarantee that one is being

more objective, but that there is no other way to objectivity. Furthermore, there is no *escape from Objectivity*.⁵⁸

C. Marx's Two-Way Explanation: BH as Surgical Genealogist

1. Rereading BH's Methodology

In light of the exposition of Marx's method, we can now move to the reconsideration of BH's project. The doubts introduced in Chapter III are worked out here by relying on what we took to be the Marxian insight in regard of the relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. BH's homomorphism between the deontic structure and the alethic structure is an attempt to think in terms of the subject-object pair. This homomorphism breaks however when there is a mismatch. "Duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is the non-actual":⁵⁹ it is in terms of

⁵⁸ We could also state the tension in terms of 'belief' and 'judgment': All beliefs can be suspended, but not judgments. Judgments capture the irreducible practical aspect of Consciousness. Introducing 'belief' at this point is foreign to the discussion, but it is helpful to draw some contrasts. Belief is a mental state, a category suitable for the philosophy of mind. This branch of philosophy is anchored in the expansion of Consciousness beyond its Rationality. It is because there is more (or less?) to sapient beings than rationality that the category of mental state is helpful; it aims at capturing a psychological aspect from a philosophical position. This little digression aims at illuminating the following: Consciousness' experience is conceptual both for Kant and Hegel, yet they differ on the scope and limits of this experience. If for Hegel, Consciousness's experience is conceptual, it is not because he expels the psyche from it, but rather because he *subsumes* it. In this construal, *belief* and *judgment* are intimately connected, or even necessarily connected. To decouple Reason from Geist, is to decouple judgment from belief. If belief is necessarily psychological, therefore from a rational point of view, it can never be trusted. Yet, there are no 'special tools' for rationality. Rationality therefore cannot but be anchored in judgments. It is because you *can* doubt all your beliefs, but you can't not judge; and also because of this asymmetry you can attempt to 'escape belief' and thus escape Consciousness' experience. This renders judgments theoretical, far from being grasped empirically. But there is a rejoinder: Doesn't this presuppose that one *believes* that such an attempt is possible? The answer is simple: No, the character of these further explications is *impersonal*. Yet the question can then be put as: How can this ever be practical? And the answer is a reminder that we *always already* judging. Furthermore, why is there a necessity to believe in these judgments? If the judgments once made, restructure part of consciousness by virtue of the conceptual constitution of consciousness, then the *effect* is present. Moreover, the ramification of these judgments is inevitable given the *external* character of the judgments: They will be assessed and thus judged by others, and a further restructuring happens at their side.

⁵⁹ Ge. Wilh. Fr. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard (Unpublished, 2008), 606. Available online at <http://terrypinkard.weebly.com/phenomenology-of-spirit-page.html>.

this Hegelian motto that Brandom articulates the relation between justification and genealogy. Moreover, while Brandom proves the primacy of the former over the latter (in the sense that it presuppose it), when justification fails, the resort is to genealogy: When reasons fail to explain, give a causal explanation. The temptation that Brandom argues against is exactly this potency of the causal explanation. Since it succeeds when justification fails, why not start as such with a causal explanation? In a nutshell, the thesis can be summed up as the following: Access to causes is mediated by our discursiveness, moreover the core of this discursiveness is the ability to give and ask for reasons, therefore any access whether to causes or otherwise presupposes this ability, and as such this ability cannot be subordinated. We can make mistakes in the game, but we cannot ultimately fail, it is a condition of Sapience as such. It is then the lack of justification that allows hypothesizing this disharmony between reasons and causes, and the always existing causal explanation that allows filling the gap. In this view it seems that reasons fail, causes don't. You can fail to justify but you cannot fail to give a causal explanation. Thus, in terms of the 'privileges' that Brandom allots to justification and genealogy, on a certain level a genealogy is more privileged: a genealogy never fails to explain.

Brandom ultimately posits the choice holistically: Either the primacy of justification or the primacy of genealogy. If one takes the latter position, one falls in incoherence; on the other hand, if one takes the former, one keeps implicit/represses/forgets about/avoids (depending on how one assesses the operation) the genealogy in so far as justification *works* (i.e. as long as the act conforms with content); only when it fails, that is, only when one exhausts justification, one resorts to genealogy, and subsequently initiates reconciliation.

2. Act — Content

The discrepancy between act and content is the condition for either reconciliation or revolution. The former re-conforms the act to content by treating the discrepancy as a contingency that is retrospectively transformed into a normative necessity. The latter immanently (and this is crucial) transforms both act and content based on the discrepancy. This does not commit us to an understanding of the discrepancy as necessary, and this is the threat for the act and content would be decoupled. The discrepancy must be taken as contingent. Yet, rather than retrospectively transforming its status, its conditions of repetition are transformed: act and content. In this sense, necessity is nothing but the repetition of the contingent, but crucially not just any contingency (this is not moving from the celebration of the contingency of necessity to the celebration of the necessity of contingency), but a contingency in a *determinate relation* to necessity. If contingency by definition is indeterminate, such that to attempt to determine it is to necessitate it, the relation between the contingency and the necessity could be determined. This is the relation between the discrepancy and content: the discrepancy is *within* the content. To understand the suggestion, it would be helpful to re-invoke Brandom's understanding of the content. In the Brandomian view, content (conceptual content) is constituted through its inferential articulations, i.e. how it stands to other content, specifically, it is inferred from and implies other content. To claim that there is a discrepancy *within* content is to challenge the inferential understanding of conceptual content. That is to say, it is to argue that content is not *solely* constituted through its inferential articulation. So what else constitutes it? If this 'something else' is determined, it would therefore qualify as content. On the other hand, if it is indeterminate, one risks slipping into skepticism. This 'something else' must therefore be

determined differently. Conceptual content is then split into ‘proper content’ and ‘something else’. As I understand Marx, this determination points to irreconcilable yet inseparable parts. That is to say, conceptual content has two levels that cannot be coherently joined yet which stand in a determined relation. It would be useful here to invoke the distinction that Marx relies on: Abstract and Concrete. The claim is then that conceptual content holds both an abstract aspect and a concrete aspect. The wager is that Brandom only captures the abstract aspect through his inferential theory but misses the other aspect precisely because he relies on the coherence of the conceptual structure. The treatment of the ‘concrete’ in Brandom is relegated to empirical representations which are not inferentially articulated but nevertheless presuppose the inferential theory of concept formation. To elucidate this point: When Brandom gives the example of the stick in water, he explains the process of a rearrangement/reconfiguration of the actor’s commitments. In this example, the actor starts with commitments about ‘water’ and ‘stick’, which upon a contingency of finding a stick in water that *appears* to be bent, prompt a doubt in his commitments. An empirical representation (“stick bent in water”) stands at odds with his commitment that ‘sticks are solid’ and ‘water does not bend solid objects’. The actor revises his commitments by following the inferential articulations of each: 1) Solidity of the Stick 2) Effect of Water on solid objects 3) Correctness of his perception. As a result, the actor asserts the first two commitments and rejects the third: The representation is wrong. Finally, the actor catalogues the wrong representation: When prompted with the same representation, the actor knows that it is wrong. Of course, Brandom is well aware that this representation includes a contribution from concepts: Without a concept of ‘water’ or ‘stick’ or ‘solidity’ ...the representation is not possible. Stated as such, the insight is Kantian, a representation of an object is necessarily (but not solely)

conceptual. Yet, in Brandom, there is no conception of ‘intuition’. Therefore, if we abstract the conceptual part of the representation, what is left for Brandom is the implicit in practice. That is to say, the residue is not experienced *as* such and such, but rather experienced in the doing, that is to say in the act. In the Brandomian picture therefore a representation holds both an explicit and an implicit aspect. In contrast, Marx separates between the initial object (the concrete-in-thought) and the *new* object (the reproduced-concrete-in-thought). Against Brandom’s reliance on the distinction Explicit—Implicit, Marx relies on Abstract—Concrete. While Brandom treats the initial representation as *already* holding an explicit and an implicit aspect, Marx claims that it is a synthesis of abstract determinations. That is to say, the representation is the “putting together” of a manifold of conceptual content. The representation is revealed as wrong once it is analyzed, i.e., once its conceptual components are articulated. This further analysis leads to the “most-abstract-in-thought”, it leads to conceptual content that depends on the least number of other contents. That is to say, the abstract-in-thought is not inferentially strong; on the contrary, it is the weakest thing that can be related to the initial representation. Explication therefore reveals the inferentially weakest conceptual content that contributes to the initial representation. Even though the representation is revealed as wrong (as abstract in Marx), Marx insists on returning to this representation. In other words, it is not *enough* to take the representation *as* wrong. This ‘return’ is nothing but further explication: a reproduction of the representation. The reproduction of representation does not yield a new representation but a *new object*. This new object is no longer an empirical representation, rather it is an object that is both abstract and concrete: its abstract aspect is conceptual, its concrete aspect is non-conceptual. The concrete aspect is nothing but the gap in the abstract. The new object does not fit in Brandom’s alethic structure, for

it holds a contradiction. What is suspected in Brandom is not the object but rather the representation of the object: the coherence of the homomorphism between the deontic and the alethic structure. The contradiction is expelled to the deontic structure: an exclusion and inclusion of commitments. On the other hand, positing a contradictory object in Marx sharply contrasts with the structural homomorphism. It is important to note that this does not commit Marx to an ontology of contradiction. Read as an Idealist, Marx does not understand representation as a relation between the conceptual and the non-conceptual. Therefore, Marx's object is not a substance; rather it is the conceptual and its discrepancy. The contradiction therefore is neither epistemological (Brandom's suggestion), nor ontological. The contradiction splits the object into its epistemological and ontological constitution. The 'concrete' far from being what *is*, is rather the irreducibility of ontology to epistemology. Broadly put, we can then say that Marx produces an objective explanation of social reality rather than an ontology of social reality. The question that remains is the following: How then are 'act' and 'content' transformed?

In the understanding provided above, a discrepancy between act and content points to the following: the act is a discrepancy in the content. This does not contradict what was mentioned before: an act that does not conform to the content is contingent. Moreover, it is indeterminate. Although a representation of the act is determined, it is only what we take the act to be. Therefore, when the act does not conform to the content, it is rather the representation of the act that is wrong. The new object produced holds the act as a discrepancy in the content. This content is what the representation of the act consists of (is a synthesis of). In this sense, Marx's objective explanation captures the discrepancy between act and content. Subsequently, the

treatment of the discrepancy must not be subjective (reconciliation) but rather objective (revolution). Marx's immanent critique of Political Economy aims at articulating the determinate negation of the object of the Political Economist: the social act of Production. The mode of this social act of production is Capitalism. The determinate negation of Capitalism for Marx is Communism.

3. *Against Heroism*

If we articulate Marx's treatment of the antagonism between Justification and Genealogy, we get the following: Justification always fails, but there is no ultimate failure. It fails because it is one sided, it accounts only for reasons. Since concepts *do not* correspond to reality (crude realism), but rather *intersect* with their objects, then reasons - which are constituted from conceptual content - are never absolute. Brandom understands this 'gap' by speaking of no *final judgments*. In this construal, justification has primacy over genealogy since it presupposes it, and it is never final, for concepts are never fixed. This flexibility is plausible yet perplexing. Brandom is making a case for normativity, and his pragmatism is conceptual and not a deflationist position on Truth, yet if judgments are not final, then it is hard to see how to judge a failure; *who is to blame?* The Subject or the conceptual apparatus? To escape this difficulty BH commits to the impossibility of objective contradiction. This is why any contradiction is relegated to the deontic realm, either prompting a revision of commitments, or a confession of 'uncommittable' content. In that sense, either the subject is blamed or the commitments themselves, but crucially not the object. On the other hand, Marx's suspicion towards justification is not a rejection of justification even though it is a suspicion towards *all* conceptual

content. The ‘no final judgment’ for Marx is translated into suspicion which is nothing but further theorizing (explication). Marx is after this very failure of justification. If causes are the other of reasons, then Marx’s search for causes is neither to *fill the gap* (Brandom’s suggestion) nor to flip the sides, substantialize the gap and treat justification as the residue or the effect (global genealogy). Rather, it is to understand the conceptual apparatus in terms of the gap. In other words, you look for causes not when reasons are insufficient, but always, for this is precisely how you treat judgements as not final. If the abstraction is not explicit as abstraction, then it is impossible not to substantialize, the commitment to ‘no final judgement’ is general and insufficient, it is abstract and thus undetermined. *What judgements are not final?* Once the question is asked in this manner, one is obliged to explicate *why* they are not final: By precisely articulating the conceptual content in terms of the gap, moreover this prompts a new understanding of objectivity as has been elaborated in the previous sub-section. I think this better captures the Hegelian motto. The articulation of the relationship between justification and genealogy *cannot* therefore be made formally, it depends on the content, for *how* the justification fails is not formal and depends on the specific content.

Let’s consider in more details the notion ‘final judgments’. What does it mean to say that there are no final judgments? The simplest interpretation is that judgments are always prone to revision. Why? Either because ‘things change with time’, or because we can never be sure of how accurate our judgments are. In this second interpretation ‘no final judgment’ means that we can never - given our discursiveness and thus the necessary abstractions that we introduce - capture an object in its full particularity. Moreover, since these two interpretations are compatible, it could be both *epistemic* and *temporal finitude*. Given this finitude, the attitude of

reconciliation is clear: If we don't inject a pragmatic component, no judgments can ever be made, for no judgment is ultimately correct; on the other hand, if they are *forcibly* made, there would be no way of revoking - re-articulating - them, for they are cannot be inscribed in the game of giving and asking for reasons. Judgments are then reduced to orders (even an assertion about how things are becomes an order, it depends on the force of the speaker).

However, this is not what Brandom takes Reconciliation to consist of. Contrary to the suggestion made above, for Brandom Reconciliation is the attitude of how to deal with our shortcomings in acting in accordance with norms. Although we know the limitation of conceptual norms as sketched above, we act upon them since they presuppose even our awareness of their limitation: awareness of their limitation presupposes committing to conceptual content. Therefore, we comply with these rules, by being ready to justify our actions based on these rules. Moreover, if we are dissatisfied with some of these rules, we have only one resource: the rules themselves. Therefore, failure to abide by norms is taken to be an anomaly, a slip from sapience to sentience, to which the attitude of reconciliation works as a rehabilitation of the judged (wrong-doer) and a double-check on the judge. The proper character of individuals is heroic. Against the heroic Brandom, Marx seems to propose a certain structure without heroes: Discrepancies are relegated to the objective realm.

In conclusion we could say that while Brandom gives primacy to justification over genealogy (genealogy presupposes justification), Marx starts a step further: although the 'concrete' presupposes the 'abstract', it is not fully determined by it. In a Brandomian register, the puzzle can be stated as such: Why is there a category of 'cause'? It is not enough to resolve the question of priority. Furthermore, why does 'cause' "fit perfectly" when justification fails? This

invites a reading where ‘reason’ and ‘cause’ are more ‘intimately’ connected than Brandom considers. In other words, ‘reason’ and ‘cause’ are internally related. To effectively give primacy to reason suggests to start on the threshold: cause/concrete. Otherwise, the primacy is merely formal. We read this as a submission to contingency/cause. On the Brandomian reconciliatory account we have to accept ‘knowable’ contingencies: they repeat and we repeat our confessions and forgivenesses. On Marx’s account, one first reads necessity in terms of contingency, only to later read contingency in terms of necessity. The second reading does not replace the first, but reproduces the contingency as a contingency in necessary relation to necessity. This would allow transforming this relation, the ambition is to stop the repetition.

D. Marx: What Is to be Done? Revolution

1. *Is without Ought: Abstract Reality or Unreal Reality*

We can now focus on the political explication of the varying alternatives and the risks inherent in each attitude. If no ‘independent’ reality is sought, then we could say that any transformation is an inversion of an inverted reality. Inverting an inverted reality does not produce a reality once again (classical reading of the negation of negation).⁶⁰ Reality is necessarily inverted. Yet not all inversions are the same. How *should* this reality be inverted? It’s not a dialectics of Reality and Illusion, rather it is a dialectics of constituted and constitutive reality/illusion. To blur the distinction between reality and illusion is not to celebrate indeterminacy or to deflate Truth. Rather it is the claim that representation and misrepresentation

⁶⁰ A similar argument is made in terms of alienation. Should we get rid of alienation? What kind of post-capitalist communist society is non-alienated? Does it mean that we overcome *mediation*? Calling for non-alienated experience runs against the core of the Hegelian project, for there is no such experience. In contemporary philosophy this could be read yet again under the heading of the ‘myth of the given’.

are intertwined. There is no representation without a misrepresentation and vice versa. Moreover this opposition is internal: Every representation is a misrepresentation and every misrepresentation is a representation. The fight is therefore *not* over the better representation; rather it is over the more radical question of *how* the pair of representation/misrepresentation is constituted. If the pair is subjectively constituted then the proper attitude is reconciliation, whereas if the pair is objectively constituted then the proper attitude is revolution. Moreover, both attitudes presuppose a certain antagonism between *is* and *ought*. To obliterate the normative *is* to substantialize what is. The appropriate attitude is conservative.⁶¹ On the other hand, to reject what *is* in the name of *ought* is to slip into Utopianism.

2. *Ought without Is: Utopia*

Utopia is an Ideal social state; it is a possibility expressed in how society *ought to be*. The defect in Utopian thinking however is the gulf it creates between what *is* and what *ought to be*. In this radical unbinding, Utopia becomes a pure possibility, a generality and as such undetermined. What *ought to be* cannot be understood in separation to - expressed through the total (unqualified) rejection of - what *is*. Neither the pragmatist nor the materialist wants to be accused of Utopian thinking. Indeed, Marx wrote several critiques against the Utopian Socialists, considering them *idealists* who confuse real change with mere thoughts of change. On the other hand, Brandom's pragmatism, his understanding of meaning in terms of use, emphasize the co-dependency between *is* and *ought*. In this view, every *is* is impregnated with an *ought*, while every *ought* is *responsible* to an *is*. Broadly construed, Brandom constructs this relation as a

⁶¹ This is already captured in BH in his discussion of pre-modernity whereby the normative and the natural are conflated as described in Chapter II.

homomorphism between the deontic (subjective) structure and the alethic (objective) structure. However, if our protagonists are clear on their dismissal of Utopia, the same is not true in regard to the *ideal*. Brandom transposes Kant's *ideal* - the regulative role of reason - into the social realm, embodied now in the *scorekeeper*. The scorekeeper is the ideal player in the game of giving and asking for reasons; that is, in the mastering of concepts through inferential articulation and thereby articulating *correct* inferences out of an assertion. It is against this ideal that *we*, the other actors, play. Of course, the scorekeeper is no-one in particular; it is rather a pragmatic (functional) interpretation of the 'sociality of reason'. The scorekeeper captures the discrepancies between the realm of is and the realm of ought (through making explicit what is implicit in practices), and as such gives reasons for (justifies) the needed transformation which ultimately produces new *doings* through new *ought to bes*.

Rhetorically, the question for Brandom is the following: Does the *scorekeeper* have a *body*? Namely does he/she have hands and a tongue? On a more serious note, the worry with Brandom's account is the indeterminacy of contingencies. Can there be an account of dealing with contingencies as such? This is a major issue in the Brandomian project. Terry Pinkard in his critique of Brandom's Hegel points to the proximity between Brandom and Fichte. Moreover, we are reminded that Hegel's dissatisfaction with Fichte is the indeterminacy of the *obstacles* that animate the I's self-relation. Hegel makes a Kantian move in reiterating Kant's theory of Judgment. Judgment is always determined. Marx and Freud in this sense are theorists of *determined contingencies*; they do not celebrate the contingency of necessity, rather they formalize the necessary contingencies for our necessity. Reading necessity in terms of contingency is an attempt to systematically tackle certain discrepancies. What Marx and Freud

rather celebrate is the potency of Reason in pointing to its own defects, which are also its transcendental conditions. If we go back to rhetorics, Marx's *hand* and Freud's *tongue* shatter the ideality of the *scorekeeper*. They do not reject the scorekeeper; rather they point to his cheating: To be a *legitimate* player you need a *hand* and a *tongue* (or to be entitled to the game, you need *hands and a tongue*).

3. Capitalism impregnated with Communism: Reanimating the Political

For Marx what *is* is capitalism while what *ought to be* is communism. Yet, the ought generated must be in a determinate relation to what is, otherwise we slip back into utopian thinking. Marx speaks of communism as a *movement*. In the *German Ideology* he writes: "We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise".⁶² This is crucial, specifically for comparing it with communism as a *state*. This latter understanding is usually narrated in terms of the necessity of communism. Critics as well as self-proclaimed Marxists took Marx's declaration of a communist society as a *prediction*. According to this story, Communism is inevitable. This narrative is rightly criticized, for it is stuck in metaphysics. In order to make such statements, Marx would need to assume a position *above* history, or would retreat to the Aristotelian teleological story of potentiality and actuality. It would then seem that Capitalism already holds the communist potential, and this potential would inevitably be actualized. The reading we are suggesting here is in sharp opposition to the teleological reading. If we say *capitalism is impregnated with communism*, we understand this relation as the intersection between the *is* and

⁶² Karl Marx, *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), 57.

the *ought*. Moreover, once we are thinking in terms of *ought*, we are navigating in a normative domain. This is the claim then that Marx's position is essentially normative, it is *prescriptive* rather than *prospective*. Yet, the motto "What *is* to be done" perhaps captures better Marx's aspiration than the more normative "What *must* be done". It is Marx's ambition in theoretical works such as *Capital* to capture what constitutes *reality* or *what is*. Marx's ultimate goal is not academic or merely intellectual but political. Understanding what *is* and thus enabling the critique of what *is*, are the conditions for politics. To act politically presupposes an objective position, and therefore political disagreement and orientation would follow the understanding of what *is*. We are reminded that Marx thinks in terms of subject-object. There is no absolute or isolated objective position. Every objective explanation is at the same time an *interpretation*. In this understanding, the *political* is neither objective nor subjective, but rather it is the *intertwinement* of both. We now attempt to articulate this intertwinement.

If revolution is no longer posited as an inevitable rupture that we could simply *await* (theological redemption), nor *any form* of transformation (a fetishization of 'practice' and a unqualified *rejection* of what *is*), then progress can neither be measured in terms of *chronological time* nor in terms of any *modal shift* (from the *necessity* of what *is* through the celebration of *any contingency*). If this tells us that *optimism* (the 'belief' in progress) is ultimately *complicit* with what *is* (for neither hopeful passivity nor mere activity challenge what *is*), the same could be told of *pessimism* (the 'belief' in regression), for the pessimist cannot measure regression without invoking the linearity of history (in this case, a series of *catastrophes*), where 'what is' would *inevitably* wither away through another catastrophe.

According to these two seemingly different attitudes, History is either a series of revolutions or a

series of catastrophes. Either progress is *substantialized* through the inconceivability of regression or regression is *substantialized* through the inconceivability of progress. Both are indeed *conservative* (of what *is*) for their unqualified rejection of the *necessity of what is*, a necessity that they ultimately contribute in perpetuating. If the revolutionary attitude is neither optimistic (things are going to get better) nor pessimistic (things are going to get worse), neither a rejection of what *is* nor a celebration of what *could* be, then ‘revolution’ is inconceivable without *thinking through contradictions*, which is both a thinking *through* Time and *about* Time. If Time is what allows *desubstantialization*, it becomes a condition of any desubstantial thinking. Moreover, escaping the metaphysics of what *is* is futile if it ends up substantializing Time: ‘Homogeneous empty Time’. Time must neither be *subjectivized* (Kant), nor *objectivized* (Historicism). If Time is ‘both’, then the articulation of its aspects must be put in terms of the conditioning of the conceptual by the non-conceptual. As we understand this, it points to the intertwinement of temporality and modality: What *is* is necessary yet not substantial, it is necessary because it *repeats*. Moreover what is repeated is the *relation* between necessity and contingency. Revolution is therefore the transformation of this relation.

For Brandom, reconciliation transforms past contingencies into necessities (or causes to reasons), which allows a retrospective narration of progress in history. Reading Marx as a local genealogist, Brandom takes Marx as not challenging the relation between causes and reasons but rather pointing to the defect of certain reasons (namely political norms) based on a causal explanation. As a result, Marx’s revolutionary attitude is dispensed with for a reconciliatory one: Social Democracy. As I have tried to develop it, Revolution differs from mere transformation not by a theological belief in progress, but rather by first acknowledging the necessity of what is

(pointing to the contingency of necessity - the enabling condition of Critique and any conception of change - neither reduces its *effectivity* nor collapses its 'legitimacy' as such), and in *determinately negating* what is.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

The threat to reconciliation is moderatism. The threat to revolution is barbarism. This is neither to dismiss moderation as such understood as a midpoint between two opposites, nor even to dismiss the ‘barbaric’ as such understood as hinging on the extreme and materialized in violence.⁶³ However, both moderatism and barbarism obliterate Truth, the former through collapsing the right in the agreeable, and the latter through dispensing with ‘right’. Reconciliation therefore risks reaffirming what *is*. Revolution risks deforming rather than transforming what *is*. The prefix ‘re-’ in each must not point to a mere repetition: To re-do is to do differently. The question is: How differently? We resort here to Hegel’s *determinate negation*.

To determinately negate what is, reconciliation operates at the subjective level: Geist is re-constituted with every discrepancy through a new narration of history that incorporates contingencies: to reproduce history is not to produce it again but neither to produce it from scratch. On the other hand, revolution operates at the objective level: Geist is re-constituted with every discrepancy through a transformation of that which condition Geist from without: the mode of the social act of production. To reproduce the mode of production is not to produce it

⁶³ It is useful to remember that while the ideal post-modern recognitive structure suggested by BH seems to dispense with violence, in actual societies the game of giving and asking for reasons is guarded by *force*: modern society is inconceivable without this ‘forced choice’. This is not to delegitimize the game of giving and asking for reasons by reducing it to a ‘game of power’. To say that modern society is inconceivable without violence is neither to impose this violence as a necessary constituent of the game of giving and asking for reasons, nor even (and this is crucial) to proclaim that every judgment or justification made in modern society is accounted for by the threat of violence. Rather it is only to point to the fact that the game of giving and asking for reasons and the ‘game of power’ *do* overlap. Subsequently violence cannot be rejected as such from any attempt at transforming society, not because violence is effective, but rather because existing violence might obliterate any non-violent attempt whether transformative or merely justificatory as forms of negotiation. This is not to celebrate violence but only to point that an a priori rejection of violence is ungrounded. Condemnation or permission of violence must attend to socio-political circumstances and must be *justifiable*.

again but neither to produce it from scratch. The condition for a determinate negation is the acknowledgment of the irreconcilable in reconciliation⁶⁴ or the ‘untransformable’ in transformation. To acknowledge the irreconcilable is already to undermine moderatism, while to acknowledge the ‘untransformable’ is already to undermine barbarism. We can then say that a *true* reconciliation pushes for revolution, while a *true* revolution *takes time*.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Rebecca Comay, “Terrors of the Tabula Rasa,” in *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁵ Ray Brassier, “Dialectics Between Suspicion and Trust,” *Stasis* 4, no. 2 (2016): 98-113.

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