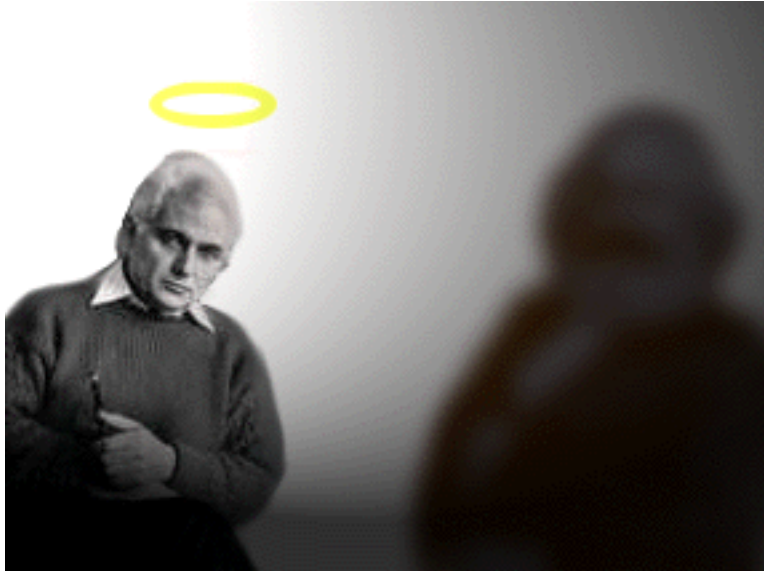


Saint Jacques: Derrida and the Ghost of Marxism

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Introduction

For the bourgeoisie, the collapse of "communism" made the world-historic victory of capitalism seem certain. Yet the contradictions of capitalism immediately called the new world order into question as globalisation brought with it what Jacques Derrida calls the "10 plagues". Apologists for capitalism are now fearful of the return of Marx's ghost. George Soros sees the ghost in the form of the anarchy of finance capital. Anthony Giddens sees the ghost in the rise of left or right fundamentalist ideology. Without realising it, they pose the problem in terms familiar to Marxists: the contradiction between dead and living labour and the rise of the dead reclaimed by the living. But is there a way out for capitalism?

Jacques Derrida enters the fray with his book *Specters of Marx*. He returns to Marx, or at least, "one spirit" of Marx in the *German Ideology*. This is the "spirit" of Marx which became lost to totalitarian Marxism -- the "spirit" rediscovered in the extreme individualism of Max Stirner, who deluded himself that he was a free floating "unique" ego not subject to any social laws. By reclaiming the powers of alienated social being from the Hegelian god, Stirner worshipped his self as his personal god. By rediscovering this formerly unnoticed "spirit" of Marx, Derrida claims to find a way out of capitalism's plagues with the call for a "new International". Not a Marxist International on the side of living labour, but rather a reworked messianism of the religion of the abstract ego. This is the path of individual redemption, an expression of the alienation of dead labour that can

never reclaim itself as the spirit of living labour. In appropriating Marx, Derrida provides the ultimate apology for capitalist reaction in the name of a "Marx" -- an ideology of personal religious salvation which serves as a philosophical left cover for the "Third Way".

In a recent reply to a number of responses to his book, Derrida re-asserts his messianic claims when he accuses his strongest critics of being "proprietal" and "patriarchal" under the ghostly influence of "Marx the father".¹ While this is undeserved, I argue that Derrida's Marxist critics nevertheless fall short of conjuring away Saint Jacques because they represent the flawed tradition of Western Marxism -- the failure of materialist dialectics grounded in the ontology of living labour. Therefore, the Marxist counter to Derrida's apologetics for capitalism is to be found in reclaiming the dialectical method that Marx applies in the *German Ideology* and which Lukacs, Lenin and Trotsky attempt to develop in the unity of theory and practice of the revolutionary party.

Post-Marxist Apologists for the New World Disorder

George Soros, one of the richest men in the world, has spent millions trying to restore capitalism in Russia. But he lost much of his money with the collapse of the Russian economy in August 1998. He claims that the global finance system is out of control and needs to be regulated. His calls for a return to an "international" like Bretton Woods, or some body attached to the IMF, have been echoed with increasing frequency after the so-called Asian "meltdown". His fear is that the casino of finance capital will bring an end to the new world order and the return to anarchy and revolution.² If Soros fears the collapse of the new world order, Tony Giddens, the apostle of the post-scarcity global society, claims that the new world order can be managed by social scientists as advisers to the politicians of the "Third Way".³ The recent discussions between Soros and Giddens about the unstable state of the world are premised on the "death" and "burial" of socialism.⁴ Giddens believes that socialism has been banished: ". . . the spectre which disturbed the slumbers of bourgeois Europe for more than seventy years . . . has been returned to its nether world".⁵

Yet it seems that these speeches at the graveside of Marxism are premature. The ghost of Marxism continues to haunt the big bourgeoisie despite every effort to exorcise it. The *Communist Manifesto* is being fleshed out as never before by a capitalist world system out of control. The end of the cold war and collapse of "communism" has allowed capitalism unrivalled domination over its "other". Yet everywhere the forces of disorder manifest themselves -- from the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, the instability of the "Middle East" and Central Asia, to the renewed worker and peasant uprisings in Latin America and South Asia. It is in the face of such rampant disorder and deepening divisions that a more robust defence of capitalism is required. In order to exorcise the ghost of communism, it is necessary to provide a philosophy of rebellion and redemption that can empower the intelligentsia to confuse and disorient the masses. Post-Marxism and the new liberalism of the centre need an anti-foundationalist foundation. Post-Marxism needs a new priesthood.⁶

If Soros is its financier and Giddens its sociologist, then perhaps Derrida is the philosopher of post-Marxism.⁷ His mission? The "new middle" needs to pre-empt the left not merely by declaring Marx dead (since who has seen the body?), but by re-erecting the body of the father as the son -- Derrida! From the safety of "After the fall" (of "communism"), Jacques Derrida, darling of the post-structuralists writes *Specters of Marx*, claiming that we are all in "debt" to Marxism as the New World Disorder crumbles.⁸ Derrida asks, "Where is Marxism going? Where are we going with it?" He recounts how he re-read *The Communist Manifesto* after some decades. "I knew very well there was a ghost waiting there, and from the opening, from the raising of the curtain. Now, of course, I have just discovered, in truth I have just remembered what must have been, haunting my memory: the *first noun* of the *Manifesto*, and this time in the singular, is 'specter': 'A Specter is haunting Europe the specter of communism'".⁹ Derrida's salutes Marx and reveals his desire to reclaim at least "one spirit" of Marx by de-totalising Marxism.¹⁰

Upon re-reading the *Manifesto* and a few other great works of Marx, I said to myself that I know of few texts in the philosophical tradition, perhaps none, whose lesson seemed more urgent *today*, provided that one take into account what Marx and Engels themselves say (for example in Engel's "Preface" to the 1888 re-edition) about their own possible "aging" and their intrinsically irreducible historicity. What other thinker has ever issued a similar warning in such an explicit fashion? Who has ever called for the *transformation* to come of his own theses? Not only in view of some progressive enrichment of knowledge, which would change nothing in the order of a system, but so as to take into account there, another account, the effects of rupture and restructuration? And so as to incorporate in advance, beyond any possible programming, the unpredictability of new knowledge, new techniques and new givens? No text in the tradition seems as lucid concerning the way in which the political is becoming worldwide, concerning the irreducibility of the technical and the media in the current of the most thinking thought -- and this goes beyond the railroad and the newspapers of the time whose powers were analysed in such an incomparable way in the *Manifesto*. And few texts have shed so much light on law, international law, and nationalism.¹¹

Derrida repeats the familiar refrain that Marxism is transformed as society is transformed. But what social transformations is he talking about? The power of Marxism to predict the changes Derrida talks of -- in politics, technology and media -- comes from the method of abstraction which uncovers the developmental dynamic of capitalism and its laws of motion. Marx expected that Marxism would disappear along with the withering of the state under socialism. Yet neither capitalism nor Marxism has been fundamentally transformed despite the rush of ex-Marxists into the post-al camp.¹² However, Derrida believes that there is a "Marxism" that can be true to transformed capitalism. It was the "Marxism" that Marx denied at birth. So Derrida wants to

magically "transform" Marxism at its inception. He wants to reclaim the "memory" of Marxism from the doctrinaires, and to produce a new Marx for the "future".

It will always be a fault not to read and re-read and discuss Marx -- which is to say also a few others -- and to go beyond scholarly "reading" or "discussion". It will be more and more a fault, a failing of theoretical, philosophical, political responsibility. When the dogma machine and the "Marxist" ideological apparatuses (States, parties, cells, unions, and other places of doctrinal production) are in the process of disappearing, we no longer have any excuse, only alibis, for turning away from this responsibility. There will be no future without this. Not without Marx, no future without Marx, without the memory and the inheritance of Marx: in any case a certain Marx, or his genius, of at least one of his spirits. For this will be our hypothesis or rather our bias: *there is more than one of them, there must be more than one of them.*[13](#)

Derrida recognises that the end of "official" Marxism has left a political vacuum to be filled. He is appalled at the apparent victory of the new right and wants to reclaim Marxism to bolster the appeal of deconstruction.[14](#) He will do this by recouping "one of [Marx's] spirits" conjured up from his youth which will bear a striking resemblance to deconstruction. Derrida recognises the "inheritance" of Marxism that cannot be wished away by the "end of ideologists". He knows because he opposed official Marxism in *his* youth, and it still haunts him.

Nevertheless, among all the temptations I will have to resist today, there would be the temptation of memory: to recount what was for me, and for those of my *generation*, who shared it during a whole lifetime, the experience of Marxism, the quasi-paternal figure of Marx, the way it fought in us with other filiations, the reading of texts and the interpretation of the world in which the Marxist inheritance was -- and still remains, and so it will remain -- absolutely and thoroughly determinate. One need not be a Marxist or a communist in order to accept this obvious fact. We all live in a world, some would say a culture, that still bears, at an incalculable depth, the mark of this inheritance, whether in a directly visible fashion or not. Among the traits that characterise a certain experience that belongs to my generation, that is, an experience that will have lasted at least forty years, and which is not over, I will isolate first of all a troubling paradox. I am speaking of a troubling effect of "déjà vu", and even of a certain "toujours déjà vu". I recall this malaise of perception, hallucination, and time because of the theme that brings us together this evening: "wither Marxism?" For many of us the question has the same age as we do. In particular for those who, and this was also my case, opposed, to be sure, *de facto* "Marxism" or "communism" (the Soviet Union, the International of Communist Parties, and everything that resulted from them, which is to say so very many things), but intended at least never to

do so out of conservative or reactionary motivations or even moderate right-wing or republican positions.[15](#)

Derrida knows that Marxism will not "wither" even as its official versions have been declared dead and buried. This is because Marxism is as "alive" as the historic struggle between dead and living labour is "alive".[16](#) The ghost of Marxism has returned to haunt Sorosian capitalism today where hot money 30 times the dollar value of world trade is flooding around the world speculating in exchange rates. That ghost is all that alienated, dead labour coming home to haunt the bourgeoisie as speculative capital.[17](#)

The growth of speculative capital represents the overproduction of capital incapable of mobilising sufficient living labour to produce more alienated surplus-value because of insufficient profits. Overproduction of capital can be in commodity form represented by gluts that cannot find a market. It is expressed also as money capital, which cannot find a profitable productive investment. So the "out of control" growth of the financial system is ultimately a symptom of the necessary overproduction of capital. Similarly the threat of fundamentalism is a consequence of the inherent crisis and anarchy of capitalist production. The real spectre is and remains the spectre of communism. It is this fear of the return of the spectre that unites Soros, Giddens and Derrida as "ideologists" of post-Marxist apologetics of the "new middle" that now seeks to replace the neo-liberal ascendancy.[18](#)

The Ghost of Dead Labour

Under capitalism, "dead labour" is all the accumulated value of past labour owned as capital. It is owned as the private property of the capitalist class. Dead labour is therefore the accumulation of past living labour. It is in contradiction with living labour -- the working class that daily produces more value. Dead labour is in contradiction with living labour because it is used to increase production of use-values only if it realises an exchange-value and creates a profit. This contradiction means that the accumulation of alienated dead labour is at the expense of the consumption of use-values to meet the needs of living labour. Production for profits starves the consumption (and therefore reproduction) of labour-power as a use value. The contradiction can only be resolved when living labour reclaims its dead labour and frees up its capacity to produce use-values to meet the needs of all. Arising out of these social relations of production, alienation is the "human" condition of capitalism. It represents the "spectre" of past labour that comes back to haunt the bourgeoisie in the form of proletarian revolution.[19](#)

Alienation is the state of being separated from your self. Marx says that humans live by their labour and by consuming the fruits of their labour, or they die. Therefore to be separated from your labour and its fruits is to be separated or estranged from your self. The "self" which bourgeois intellectuals today mystify as "identity" or "lifestyle" is empty, phoney, because it is not produced through our labour. Rather our ersatz "self" is passively reconstituted when we consume our alienated labour as reified commodities.[20](#) Instead of seeing that it is our labour that is the value in the "things", these "things" appear to have value in themselves. Social relations of production become inverted as

social relations between "things". Marx calls this commodity fetishism. Who we are, and what we are, is therefore the product of what we consume as alienated values. Because our labour and its value is alienated so is everything else. Money is now everything. I am, as Marx says, my hip pocket. I "shop therefore I am".[21](#)

At the root of what is rotten about capitalism is the separation of workers from their labour so that they do not control the fruits of their labour. This means that they have lost any control over their lives. The less control they have the more they look for alien forces as the forces which determine their fate, or in desperation they challenge fate by appealing to the irrationality of chance or good luck. Under the grip of alien forces they are incapable of recognising that they are mere projections of their own power. They fail to see that they externalise their power to fate, chance, God etc as alien and outside their control. Is it not surprising that appeals to irrational, supernatural, out-of-world experiences, mysticism, and post-modernism, become alibis for *not* taking control of ourselves? The alienated bourgeois subject staring into the mirror! What the bourgeois fear is what they do not see in the mirror -- the ghost of dead labour that haunts them; yet it will disappear only when living labour re-expropriates its dead labour and abolishes capital in a social revolution.

That is why for ideological reactionaries today the spectre is still proletarian "communism". In the language of conservative neo-Hegelians like Fukuyama, it is the totality of the working-class essence (forms of which appear as "socialist", environmentalist, religious fundamentalism, etc.) posing a threat to the unique, finite freedom of the bourgeois subject, i.e. capital. Derrida demolishes Fukuyama as an objective idealist incapable of providing a rationale to defend democracy and human rights.[22](#) This because such a "perfect liberal democracy" is in "contradiction" with the real world of the "10 plagues", and cannot therefore persuade anyone that the "end of history" has arrived.[23](#) But more than this, Hegelian idealism is another totalitarian system which has to be rejected along with its cross cousin, dialectical materialism.

Similarly, post-modernism's ghost is too abstract for Derrida's purposes because it repudiates the Enlightenment project and humanism as totality. It tries to gloss over capitalism's contradictions and to present the commodification of the world as personal redemption. This retreat into an elitist consumption culture and identify politics is too crude to contain the masses who are deprived of use-values. We shall see that the precise point at which Derrida appropriates Marxism is his rejection of the ontology of labour as a use-value. This is to eliminate labour as productive of commodities to meet the needs of wage-labour. For to allow labour as use-value to remain as a necessary condition of capitalism is to recognise the necessary contradiction between the reproduction of society (forces of production) and the demands of capital accumulation (relations of production). Such a contradiction drives the laws of motion of capital and its intensifying periodic crises. This is what makes capitalism a transient, historical mode of production, which produces the pre-requisites for the collective transformation of capitalist social relations.

By conjuring away the real ghost of use-value, Derrida eliminates the material basis of social determinism that can undermine and threaten the messianic performance of the

bourgeois individual.²⁴ He eliminates it as labour both in the form of living labour appropriated as commodities, and as dead labour, appropriated in the past as the accumulated material/technical wealth of the productive forces. Therefore the new challenge of capitalism in decline is for its ideologists to appropriate "Marxism" in the name of "radical" democracy ie. bourgeois individualism. There is a need for more subtlety; for an 'indirect apologetics' which takes capitalism's "plagues", and attempts to explain them as ethical sins that can be redeemed by the pure moral intentions of "responsible" intellectuals.²⁵ There is a need for a post-Marxism that can claim to be both post- *and* 'radical' ie. true to Marx. This requires a new initiative to restore Marx to his "self".

Derrida, following the "death of Marxism", tries to marry "one spirit" of Marx to deconstruction by repudiating Marx's ontology of living and dead labour as the social forces shaping the lives of alienated bourgeois individuals. As I hope to show, this 'take' on the humanist "spirit" of young Marx, attempts to recoup the subjective idealism of Max Stirner as that of the young Marx also. To help make this point I will critique a number of critics of Derrida's recent "turn" to Marxism to show that they all fail to recognise the deeply reactionary project lying at the heart of Derrida's "spirit" of Marx.²⁶

Derrida's Critics

It is interesting to see how Derrida's critics interpret his (re)turn to Marx. Eagleton makes some caustic comments on Derrida's "opportunism", his "academicist fantasy that he has somehow mistaken for an enlightened anti-Stalinism". He makes fun of Derrida: "It is the ultimate post-structuralist fantasy: an opposition without anything as distastefully systemic or drably 'orthodox' as an opposition, a dissent beyond all formulable discourse, a promise which would betray itself in the act of fulfilment, a perpetual excited openness to the Messiah who had better not let us down by doing anything as determinate as coming".²⁷ Yet Eagleton does not pursue Derrida's political purpose in re-fashioning the de-totalised Young Marx.

Spivak, the "Marxist" most sympathetic to Derrida has tried for 10 years or more to marry Derrida to a deconstructed Marx.²⁸ Her purpose is to rid Marx of what she sees as the idealist hangover of an undercover humanist universalism. But in the process she turns Marx into a Feuerbach who sees some abstract Enlightenment social essence (the unity of "nature" and "reason") which can only be realised in the intellect.²⁹ Spivak picks up on several shortcomings in Derrida's treatment of Marx. He denies the dual nature of the commodity and counter-poses use-value as the future release from exchange-value. Socially necessary labour time is not the measure of value. He universalises money as capital so his brand of utopian socialism is to remove money -- exchange-value -- and replace it with use-values. (Remember the attack on Proudhon in the opening passages of the *Grundrisse*.) To extend Spivak's critique further, Derrida's discourse on the 'new world disorder' reduces to a critique of unequal exchange -- not of labour values but of money "values" or prices as determined by the market.³⁰ This means that insofar as "exploitation" exists it results from individuals buying commodities cheap and selling them dear. Equitable consumption then becomes a matter of caveat emptor. This reduces

ideologically to performativity as "market choice" similar to that of Hayek or the "negative freedom" of Berlin.

Spivak's blind spot on Marx is her view that the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value is not a real contradiction that motivates the class struggle. She thinks that Marx sets up the goalposts of a socialist "society" at which we take aim by intellectually overcoming of the shortfall of reason with doses of political dogma. This is the familiar post-structuralist critique of totalising Marxism as yet another Enlightenment teleology that has to fail.³¹ Marx, however, argued against idealist conceptions of revolution. The contradiction between use-value and exchange-value was, and is, a real contradiction. It is class struggle at the point of production and not in the academy that motivates capitalism's crisis-ridden development. The limits to capitalism's development will be decided by the practical struggle of the proletariat, and not by philosophers. While Spivak picks up on some of Derrida's obvious "mistakes" she misses the main one -- that the purpose of Marxism is not merely to interpret the world but to change it.³²

Thus Spivak's blind spot obscures the real source of Derrida's weakness in his fixation on Stirner. She attempts to "correct" Derrida conceptually, but cannot understand why he "mistakes" Marx. This is because these are not "mistakes", but the result of deliberately "excluding" the spirits of labour, class, the "party", etc., i.e. the "totalitarian Marx". Because Derrida is obsessed by these evil spirits, he cannot follow Marx into the *Grundrisse* or *Capital* to demonstrate the material laws of motion that elaborate and pose the practical resolution of the real contradiction between use-value and exchange-value as social revolution. Derrida purposely excludes these unwanted spirits so that he can recover the pure spirit of rebellion against "evil" in the acts of faith of individuals taking "responsibility" (weak messianic force).

Jameson, too, is sympathetic. While driven to explain post-modernism as a cultural expression of late capitalism (or more recently finance capital) Jameson has no brief to unite Derrida and Marx. Yet he finds Derrida's fixation on the young Marx refreshing. He seems to endorse Derrida's position on "messianism" shorn of the "apocalyptic" ontological certainties of Marxism. He accepts that Derrida's appeal to the "messianic" is akin to that of Benjamin's "weak messianic power".³³ Here he is referring to Benjamin's conception of revolution as the "unexpected" as opposed to the Stalinist and Social Democratic "rhetoric of historic inevitability". Jameson sees in Derrida's return to the young Marx a way of conceiving of

post-modern virtuality, a daily spectrality that undermines the present and the real without any longer attracting attention at all; it marks the originality of our social situation, but no-one (before Derrida) has re-identified it as a very old thing in quite this dramatic way -- it is the emergence, at the very end of Derrida's book, of spectrality, of the messianic, as "the differential deployment of the tekhné, of techno science of tele-technology". Perhaps we need something similar here: Marx's purloined letter: a whole new programme in itself surely, a wandering signifier capable of keeping any number of conspiratorial futures alive.³⁴

This limp solidarity with Derrida's radical indeterminacy fits with Ebert's assessment that for Jameson consumption is the "basis for capital accumulation in postmodernism". "Jameson offers a model of the mode of production that erases the appropriation of surplus labour just as thoroughly as does Baudrillard's hyperreal semiotic system".³⁵ Ebert does not expand on Jameson's preference for the consumption moment over the production moment. I think it can be found in his adoption of Mandel's theory of Late Capitalism.³⁶ Because Mandel makes crisis contingent on many causes including underconsumption he opens the door for Jameson to develop his consumptionist explanation of post-modernism.³⁷

More recently Jameson has moved further away from Marx by adopting Arrighi's model of capitalist development which separates and isolates the overproduction of MC as "finance capital" as a definite stage in the cycle of capitalist development.³⁸ The effect is to shift the cause of the post-modern cultural turn from the drive to consume to the drive to speculate which becomes further separated from the production moment and production relations. The ills of capitalism in its current historical context are seen to be the result of the decline of US hegemony caused by the rise of financial speculation. There is no Marxist conception of the fundamental causes the financial speculation itself, or how this will "determine" a crisis of capitalist production relations and the re-emergence of the enlightenment project as socialist revolution. It is not surprising then that Jameson cannot account for much that is going on in the world and finds Derrida's appeal to the "virtuality" of the "always-now" attractive.³⁹

Fletcher gets closer to Derrida/Stirner's extreme individualism. Fletcher argues that Derrida is reclaiming the Young Hegelian Marx but with a Stirner twist. Derrida collapses modernity into the abstract "past-present-future". The abandonment of any historicity of social relations for an ahistorical metaphysics of time allows him to set up a surreptitious "transcendental hauntology" against ontology -- which he sees as metaphysics ie. the attempt to exorcise hauntology.⁴⁰ Yet obviously Derrida is privileging a meta-ontology which says that egos are shapeless and empty of substance or presence unless formed by a succession of irreducible acts (differance).

So hauntology is a subversive meta-narrative which says that in history there is no objective or material reality such as the necessity of social relations, only a reality which is the projection of the indeterminate (free will) ego. Any ontology that specifies "being" in relation to social essences, including social relations, is pre-empted by a bogus anti-essential ghosts-in-general/hauntology. In other words there is no "essence" beyond the individual who can perceive and understand social relations only as a sequence of indeterminate acts of "free will", i.e. market choice. Any attempt to give this indeterminate chaos substance as a collective, universal essence is to engage in metaphysics -- i.e., ghosts. Derrida writes:

What is a ghost? What is the effectivity or the presence of a specter, that is, for what seems to remain as ineffective, virtual, insubstantial as a simulacrum? . . . Let us call it a hauntology. This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than an ontology or a thinking of

Being. It would harbour within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves.[41](#)

By coining a term "hauntology" to exorcise the ghosts of Enlightenment determinism, Derrida must pre-empt the ontological (and epistemological) assumptions of "being" (rationality) by counter-posing a radical "essence" of "nothingness" (irrationality). Here he borrows from Heidegger.[42](#)

Derrida draws on Heidegger in particular in his reference to the notion that the "time is out of joint". It is an attempt to explain how the "present" is formed out of the actions of individuals not 'caused' by past or future, but for whom the present is shaped by indeterminate "traces", i.e. before society, before psychology, etc. Derrida refers to Hamlet and his predicament ("time is out of joint") to suggest that the "disjointure" of past present and future can only be "rejoined" in acts of pure justice. Heidegger calls this irreducible act a "gift" meaning it has no market or exchange value. Of this Derrida says:

There is first of all a gift without restitution, without calculation, without accountability. Heidegger thus removes such gift from any horizon of culpability, of debt, of right, and even, perhaps of duty. . . . Beyond right, and still more beyond juridicism, beyond morality, and still more beyond moralism, does not justice as relation to the other suppose on the contrary the irreducible excess of a disjointure or an anachrony, some *Un-Fuge*, some "out of joint" dislocation in Being and in time itself, a disjointure that, in always risking the evil, expropriation, and injustice against which there is no calculable insurance, would alone be able to do justice or to render justice. . . . Otherwise justice risks being reduced once again to juridical-moral rules, norms or representations, within an inevitably totalising horizon (movement for adequate restitution, expiation, or reappropriation).[43](#)

Derrida then goes on to explain how such pure acts can realise social justice.[44](#) The "Messianic: the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable singularity of the *arrivant as justice*". This is the "ineffaceable mark" of "Marx's legacy". Following Blanchard's "Marx's Three Voices", Derrida says that Marx asks us:

Not to maintain together the disparate, but to put ourselves there where the disparate itself holds together, without wounding the dis-jointure, the dispersion, or the difference, without effacing the heterogeneity of the other. We are asked (enjoined perhaps) to turn *ourselves* over to the future, to join ourselves in this *we*, there where the disparate is turned over to this singular *joining*, without conception or certainty of determination, without knowledge, without or before the synthetic junction of the conjunction and the disjunction. The Alliance of a *rejoining* without conjoined mate, without organisation, without party, without nation, without state, without property (the "communism" that we will later nickname the new International)".[45](#)

This attempt to use Heidegger to read Marx backwards as a deconstructionist also explains what he finds useful in the extreme egoism of Max Stirner.[46](#) Derrida fixes on Stirner because Stirner learned to live with, and like, his "spooks", i.e. the "spirit" of his unique ego -- the pre-social, pre-religious, pre-everything act of *self*-determination.[47](#) In Stirner's mind these acts are the irreducible effects/spectres of his own egoistic being, messianic eschatology and teleology even. The absolute ideal becomes the "unique" ego. These "spooks" are not "totalities" coming back to haunt the ruling class because there is no class and no rule, in fact no society even. All there is is the uniquely posited pre-social individual and his (*sic*) "own" property.[48](#)

Fletcher suggests that Derrida gets into retro mode at a point when Marx made the decisive break with the Young Hegelians who had yet to expunge religion (alienation) from their cult of humanity. But more than this, I argue that Derrida recuperates a pre-Marxist Stirnerian anarchism and projects it forwards not only as an antidote to totalitarian Marxism in the present (which is largely defunct) but more importantly to any revival of revolutionary Marxism in the future. By selecting a voluntarist "spirit" of the young Marx, Derrida regresses into the pre-history of Western Marxism and defaults into a form of liberal anarchism.

Why Stirner?

Stirner is usually seen as an anarchist who in rejecting Hegel takes subjective idealism to its extreme.[49](#) In so doing, Stirner exposes some of the weakness of the Left Hegelians and forces Marx to make a complete break with idealism.[50](#) That is why it is Stirner and not Feuerbach or Bauer, who becomes the main target of Marx's ferocious critique in *The German Ideology*.[51](#) Marx's critique of Stirner is motivated by the appeal that Stirner's brand of radical egoism has against his own materialist method and politics. This seductive idealism had to be pulled out at the roots. Marx goes for the throat of Saint Max Stirner.

We spoke above of the German philosophical conception of history. Here, in Saint Max we find a brilliant example of it. The speculative idea, the abstract conception, is made the driving force of history, and history is thereby turned into the mere history of philosophy. But even the latter is not conceived as, according to existing sources, it actually took place -- not to mention how it evolved under the influence of real historical relations -- but as it was understood and described by recent German philosophers, in particular Hegel and Feuerbach. And from these descriptions again only that was selected which could be adapted to the given end, and which came into the hands of our saint by tradition. Thus, history becomes a mere history of illusory ideas, a history of spirits and ghosts, while the real, empirical history that forms the basis of this ghostly history is only utilised to provide bodies for these ghosts; from it are borrowed the names required to clothe these ghosts with the appearance of reality. In making this experiment our saint frequently forgets his role and writes an undisguised ghost-story.[52](#)

Stirner's peculiar brand of ghost story in which realism and idealism are historically unified as "egoism" is just another "dishing up" of a "tedious" and "boring" speculative history, says Marx. "Moreover, the strong competition among the German speculative philosophers makes it the duty of each new competitor to offer an ear-splitting historical advertisement for his commodity".⁵³ Having noted that even in 1845 philosophers were commodifying their speculations, an insight that applies even more to recent French philosophy, Marx proceeds to take apart the use-value of Stirner's commodity phrase by phrase.

Stirner's egoism is an idealist fiction, itself as much an "essence" as the religious conventions he assails. "How little it occurs to him to make each "unique" the measure of his own uniqueness, how much he uses his own uniqueness as a measure, a moral norm to be applied to other individuals, like a true moralist, forcing them into his Procrustean bed".⁵⁴ His notion of the "individual" is shorn of social relations and so reproduces an "association of egoists" as an "ideal copy of capitalist society, of Hegel's civil society". Marx jokes that Stirner, "would be allocated a place in the capitalist division of labour", of which he is totally ignorant.⁵⁵ In destroying Stirner's notion of "freedom of labour" as "free competition of workers among themselves", Marx develops his concept of abstract labour.⁵⁶ In his demolition of Stirner's "rebellion" and rejection of "communism", Marx offers a dialectical and historical conception of the individual whose self-activity and self-realisation is achieved by the transformation of social relations in practice.⁵⁷ "Modern universal intercourse can be controlled by individuals . . . only when controlled by all. . . . Only at this stage, does self-self activity coincide with material life, which corresponds to the development of individuals into complete individuals. . . . The transformation of labour into self-activity corresponds to the transformation of the earlier limited intercourse into the intercourse of individuals as such".⁵⁸

For Derrida, however, Marx's critique (his ontological response to Stirner's mystification of labour) entailed the "totalising horizon" of an essential "communism", conceived by Marx in the *German Ideology*, but realised as the actually existing communism of the 20th century. For Derrida, this vindicates Stirner's objection to "communism" as doing "violence to the individual's freedom", against Marx's fundamental critique of Stirner's egoism, which takes as its starting point the "unfreedom" of labour under capitalism.⁵⁹ Thus for Derrida, Marx fear of the ghost/void of the "unique" ego lead him to posit "unfree labour" as a totalitarian essence. To follow Stirner, Marx should have responded not by "filling in a void" but by "increasingly emptying it out".⁶⁰ Here the "void" is the indeterminacy of society represented by "spectrality" and exercise of "hauntology" against all totalising operations in ghost-busting. But Marx's critique of Stirner/Derrida is precisely to "fill in the void" with the knowledge of the social relations which determine the "being" in front of its "consciousness" so that the real specter of "dead labour" can be brought back to life.

So it seems that Derrida has put his finger on what was a decisive turning point in Marx's shift from post-Hegelian idealism to historical materialism. Marx was determined to overcome alienation by recognising its material other -- "unfree labour" -- rooted in the social relations of production. Derrida senses that this is the crucial point at which Marx

defeats subjective idealism. So he wants to undermine the adoption of the philosophical method of dialectical materialism in its embryonic form. He wants to get in at the beginnings of Marxism so as to abort any rebirth of historical materialism out of the ashes of Stalinism and Menshevik Western Marxism. He must do this by inserting a subjective idealism that is congenial to the post-modern petty bourgeois' desire for personal

Callinicos and Eagleton suggest that something of this sort is Derrida's purpose but don't pursue the argument further. Callinicos is correct to point to the absence of any link between Derrida's "messianic eschatology" and "any theoretical understanding of the dynamics of historical transformation".⁶¹ "Marx thus relies, according to Derrida, on "an ontology of presence as actual reality and as objectivity relative to which spectres and other forms of representation of the absent can be 'conjured away' by being reduced to their material conditions, the world of labour, production, and exchange".⁶²

So how is it that Derrida can make such a belated reconciliation with "one-spirit" of Marx? What was he doing when others such as Althusser attempted to rescue Marxism from Stalinism? Derrida, after all, is proud to state that he opposed "everything" to do with Marxism for twenty years.⁶³ He supported the cause of Chris Hani in South Africa, but who to the left of Kissinger did'nt? Callinicos cannot come up with any real explanation for Derrida's renewed interest in Marxism. Callinicos own stalinophobic politics is a blind spot, which obscures the reason Derrida could not take up an active anti-Stalinist stand such as that of Trotsky's "Fourth International". Like Derrida, Callinicos was taken by surprise at the collapse of Stalinism. Neither had a theoretical basis on which to predict the outcomes in the Stalinist states; how could there be a counter-revolution in the counter-revolution? Hence the unexpected counter-revolutions of 1989.⁶⁴

In my opinion, this is a telling point against Callinicos' own Marxism. On the one hand, Derrida is a subjective idealist. He wants to free the authentic act of the ego from any social determination. Ultimately this freedom is a religious experience -- in which Stirner's free ego is the pure expression of messianic salvation.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Callinicos' rejection of Marx's analysis of the determinate effects of commodity fetishism on consciousness traps him in an equally idealist position of the spontaneously class conscious proletariat.⁶⁶ For me this explains why Callinicos can only take his critique of Derrida so far. To take it any further would require an overcoming of the idealist baggage that both Derrida and Callinicos, in their own way, bring from Western Marxism.⁶⁷

Eagleton criticises Jameson's "summary treatment" of Derrida's politics in defending Derrida's brand of "left" deconstruction opposing "post-Marxism" and attacks on Althusser. Yet, he says, "Derrida's 'left' deconstruction seems no more than a 'left liberalism', well meaning, flexible, participatory if somewhat theoretically diffuse political programmes of the traditional New Left. Is there to be a Deconstructive Party alongside the Democrats, or is the encounter between Marxism and deconstruction not that kind of thing at all?"⁶⁸ ". . . Derrida has turned to Marxism just when it has become marginal, and so, in his post-structuralist reckoning, rather more alluring. (He has in fact

no materialist or historical analysis of Stalinism whatsoever as opposed to an ethical rejection of it)".[69](#)

Eagleton recognises that it is no coincidence that Derrida rediscovers the early Marx just as the "late" Marx of the Second International, and the Stalinist Third International, has been certified dead and buried. He can see that Derrida wants to reclaim that part of Marx that retrospectively makes deconstruction the genuine Marxism. Yet Eagleton fails completely to see what is at stake here. Derrida's is not merely an intellectual exercise in which deconstruction becomes the 'new' new left fashion any more than Stirner's unique was the fashion in young Hegelian circles. It may be that Stalinism and Second International menshevism have suffered an historic defeat, but that is not to say that the idealist method (the totalised Marx) which underpins Western Marxism is dead.

More important, the re-emergence of capitalist crisis tendencies carries the threat of a renewal of revolutionary Marxism. So it seems to me that in anticipation of this contest, Derrida, like other post-Marxist ideologues, is insinuating himself into the lineage of Western Marxism at the point of its inception to claim the franchise on genuine Marxism. Therefore the appropriation of Stirnerian "rebellion" as a deconstruction of materialist ontology is a conscious attempt to install an anti-materialist subjective idealist "spirit" of Marxism against the time and place of the revival of revolutionary Marxism.

From Pre- to Post-Marx via Benjamin?

The attempts by Laclau and Critchely to recruit Derrida to a self-conscious post-Marxism support this view. Their shift towards indeterminacy and contingency is on a convergence course with Derrida's rejection of "totalitarian" Marxism.[70](#) Laclau is optimistic that "deconstruction can present itself both as a moment of its inscription in the Marxist tradition as well as a point of turning/deepening/supersession of the latter". For Laclau, the true Marxist tradition is the "Sorelian-Gramscian" line within Western Marxism where "material forces" become "loose and indeterminate", and where the "distinction between the ethical and political becomes blurred".[71](#) Negri's position is similar. He chides Derrida for his nostalgia, but commends him for producing a "new theory of spectrality, which corresponds with common experience: an experience of the everyday, and/or the masses, the experience of a mobile, flexible, computerized, immaterialized and spectral labour".[72](#) In other words there is a shift from objective idealism: fate, the proletarian mission, etc to subjective idealism. After all, if "material forces" become contingent, and indeed Marxism becomes one of many "emancipations", who or what is the revolutionary subject?

Lukacs makes the point about bourgeois apologetics at the beginning of the imperialist epoch that it is an elite philosophy of the 'parasitic intelligentsia' who in response to the crises of war and revolution set out to "philosophically demolish dialectics and historical materialism" by "incorporating its 'serviceable' and suitably 'purified' elements".[73](#) Similarly, in the current period of late imperialist crisis the role of 'revolutionary subject' falls by default to the counter-hegemonic intellectual/priest who infiltrates the camp of the class enemy, and articulates indeterminacy as a "weak

messianic power". This is a direct reference to Derrida's supposed affinity with Benjamin in an attempt to incorporate his "seviceable" and "purified" elements to bolster Derrida's post-"Marxist" credentials.

While Jameson takes Derrida's appeal to Benjamin seriously Callinicos is not taken in. He argues that Derrida's attraction for Stirner fits with the latter's "proto-Nietzschean tone". He comments: "One might say that the poststructuralist discovery of Stirner was bound to happen sooner or later". By comparison, Benjamin's "tortuous, ambiguous, but ultimately decisive moment towards revolutionary socialism and historical materialism -- showed that the reverse is true, that 'messianic extremity' requires a materialist anchorage".⁷⁴ Yet Callinicos does not speculate about why it is necessary for Derrida, as opposed to poststructuralism in general, to rediscover Stirner as "proto Nietzschean" and still make a gesture towards Benjamin the genuine Marxist.⁷⁵ Either Benjamin is not a real Marxist or Derrida is.

But Derrida's gesture towards Benjamin is rhetorical, since his conception of the "messianic" is very different from that of Benjamin, who takes as read Marx's critique of Stirner's "rebellion".⁷⁶ In his recent response to his interlocuters, Derrida clarifies what he means by 'messianic'. This is a "messianicity without messianism" -- i.e. messianicity without a messiah, without utopia.

Nothing could be further from Utopia and Utopianism, even in its "subterranean" form, than the messianicity and spectrality which are at the heart of *Specters of Marx*. While Benjamin still has traces of Jewish and Marxist "messianism" . . . messianicity (which I regard as a universal structure of experience, and which cannot be reduced to religious messianism of any stripe) is anything but Utopian: it refers, in every *here-now*, to the coming of an eminently real, concrete event, that is, to the most irreducibly heterogenous otherness. Nothing is more "realistic" or "immediate" than this messianic apprehension, straining forward toward the event of him who/that which is coming . . . messianicity mandates that we interrupt the ordinary course of things, time and history *here-now*: it is inseparable from an affirmation of otherness and justice. As this unconditional messianicity *must* therefore negotiate its conditions in one or other singular, practical situation, we have to do here with the locus of an analysis and evaluation, and therefore of a responsibility.⁷⁷

There is clearly a massively subjective idealist project here. The "unconditional messianicity" as the "universal structure of experience" is devoid of social relations (and is therefore a void/specter) and is wholly self-driven like the sovereign consumer of bourgeois ideology. The "affirmations" of "otherness", "justice" (meaning the gift without obligation) is the substance of social responsibility. No wonder Derrida thinks that Benjamin's messianism has some way to go before it arrives at "messianicity". Meanwhile Derrida merely suggests a "possible convergence" between himself and Benjamin. He wonders:

If Benjamin does not link the privileged moments of this "weak messianic power" to determinate historico-political phases, or, indeed crises. . . . Thus there would be, for Benjamin critical moments (pre-revolutionary or post-revolutionary). moments of hope or disappointment, in short, dead ends during which a simulcrum of messianism serves as an alibi. Whence the strange adjective "weak". I am not sure I would define the messianicity I speak of as power (it is, no less, a vulnerability or a kind of absolute powerlessness); but even if I did define it as power, as the movement of desire, as the attraction, invincible elan or affirmation of an unpredictable future-to-come (or even as the past to come again), the experience of the non-present, of the non-living present in the living present (of the spectral I would never say, in speaking of this "power", that it is strong or weak For in my view, the universal, quasi-transcendental structure that I call messianicity without messianism is not bound up with any particular moment of (political or general) history or culture (Abrahamic or any other); and it does not serve any sort of messianism as an alibi, does not mime or reiterate any sort of messianism, does not confirm or undermine any sort of messianism.[78](#)

Yet Benjamin's messianism was not an alibi in the sense that Derrida means it -- as a capitulation to the specter of (Abrahamic or Marxist or both) determinism. Quite the opposite. Benjamin's own messianism fell short of Marx's sense of "vocation", or "destiny" of the communist individual for whom self-determination is a collective social act.[79](#) Benjamin rejected the party as playing into the hands of bourgeois culture, while he sought to explode the contradictions from inside bourgeois culture.[80](#) He was a dedicated communist committed to class struggle as the means of transcending the reified bourgeois subject. There is nothing in Benjamin's role as communist intellectual to suggest any "messianic power", however weak. He did not act as a Stirnerian ego deluded about his "freedom". This would have reproduced in Benjamin the melancholy he found in all theological (spirit-ridden) transcendence, as against the materialist transcendence which occurs when knowledge of the "fully concrete" (i.e. void filled in) and mediated "moment" destroys bourgeois culture and its economic underpinnings.[81](#)

The manner of Benjamin's death raises important questions that cannot be answered here about the role of the detached communist intellectual compared to the party cadre.[82](#) Derrida implies in Benjamin's rejection of the "Communist Party" a tendency towards a "hauntology" of the ghosts of determinism making his rebellion possible. Benjamin's suicide may have had the appearance of an authentic undetermined act. But it was the "overdetermined" action of physically isolated, power-less and "defeated" communist individual.[83](#) Derrida identifies only with a surface resonance of Benjamin's "rebellion" and misses the historical and material conditions that determined his life and death. Derrida would have been a mortal enemy in Benjamin's project to rid the world of capitalism and its reified (alienated) subjects.

Nevertheless, in flirting with Benjamin, Derrida is trying to re-appropriate a "spirit" of Marxism, which is much more than David Harvey claims:

Derrida's resort to something akin to the Leibnezian conceit in his discussion of self-other relations as he examines how the "European subject" (an entity that Leibniz was also crucially concerned with) constitutes itself on the inside through the construction of the "other" -- the colonial subject. Spivak (1988:294) approvingly cites Derrida's strategy as follows: "To render thought or the thinking subject transparent or invisible seems to hide the relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation. It is in the interest of such cautions that Derrida does not invoke 'letting the other(s) speak for himself' but rather invokes an 'appeal' to, or 'call' to the 'quite-other' . . . of 'rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us'. The dangers of such a gesture are obvious. If the only way in which the 'other' can be represented is through 'rendering delirious' the voices that I have internalised in the process of discovering myself, then very soon the identities of 'l'autre c'est moi' become as surely planted as did the thesis of 'l'estate c'est moi'".[84](#)

This passage echoes Marx's critique of Stirner forcing the "other" into his "Procrustean bed". But the point is surely that, for Marx, Leibniz's philosophy had already been transcended by Hegel who had overcome the false Kantian dualism and united objective and subjective realities. The young Hegelians then turned Hegel "right side up" but retained the mystical kernel in the ahistorical abstraction of humanity. So it is not Leibniz who becomes the reference point for Derrida, but rather Stirner who took the ideal of humanity to the extreme of the "unique" individual. His subjective idealism rejected all social norms and conventions as limits on the free ego. For Derrida this represents the lost "spirit" of the early Marx who made the mistake of not rejecting his own "haunting", i.e. his own self "reduced" to social relations of production. Derrida is not interested in the Leibniz pre-capitalist monad, but the young-Hegelian "self" which Marx "denied". It is Derrida's insistence that Marx "denied" his true spirit, which Derrida wants to conjure up and restore to life that gives Derrida's intervention its political point.

I want to suggest that Derrida's intervention in *Specters* is not a frontal attack on Western Marxism a la post-modernism in general as Harvey would suggest. Post-modernism rejects the Enlightenment frame in which Marxism is also caught. Derrida accepts that the "humanist" project is what is at stake. He does not turn his back on the Enlightenment, but picks up on its critique of Hegel's objective idealism by the Young Hegelians. He wants to restore the "humanist project" to the free will of the undetermined ego by denying the alienated bourgeois subject with its roots in the ontology of labour.

Derrida locates the 'free spirit' of Marx in Stirners' defence of private property, in civil society as an "association of egoists", and in Stirner's rejection of revolutionary violence as a totalitarian threat to individual freedom.[85](#) He also hopes to enlist Benjamin in his reconstruction project. However, as I have argued, there is nothing in Benjamin that allows him to be reduced to the idealist "autonomous ego". Moreover, his "idealist residue" is a powerful stimulus to the rebuilding of a dialectical Marxism, against Derrida's deconstruction project.[86](#) Thus Stirner's anarchist idealism is a much more

suitable go-between than Benjamin's "weak messianic power" in the marriage of Marxism and deconstruction.

So far his critics can go. Beyond this point, Derrida wants to dehistoricise the origins of Marxism via deconstruction as a contemporary "indirect apologetics" for capitalism. His is a pre-emptive strike to render Western Marxism even more harmless than it is, and provide an antidote to any revival of revolutionary Marxism. Those critics who are part of Western Marxism, and whose method reflects the idealist split between objective and subjective reality, leave the proletariat exposed to Derrida's political purpose. Their critiques remain one-sided critiques of ideology unless they are capable of uniting the theory and practice in a revolutionary party.[87](#)

It is striking that in his reply to his critics in "Marx and Sons" Derrida makes use of the failure of his Marxist critics to demolish his surreptitious religion. By this I mean Derrida's celebration of alienation as performativity, and of deconstruction as "emptying the void" (i.e. ghost worship). He turns on his critics, accusing them (Spivak, Eagleton and Ahmad) of defending "Marx the father's property" as their inheritance.[88](#) "To whom is Marxism supposed to belong?" he asks. This is the sort of question that can only be asked by one intellectual of another. No doubt Derrida's answer is that Marxism belongs to those who can "transform" Marxism according to the "spirit" of Marx. His criticism is that the "proprietary Marxists" should leave the patriarchal household. My answer is: Marxism does not "belong" to anyone, but it is the "ineffaceable mark" of the proletariat for which it is the promissory note of an historic emancipation. To prove that this is not some rival *messianism* with Marx as the patriarch, it will be necessary to return to the Marx's method in the *German Ideology* and to the work of Lukacs and Lenin to counter Derrida's misappropriation of Marx.

Indirect Apologetics

If it is true that Derrida's "turn to Marx" is to subvert a genuine Marxism, how must he try to do this? In a word he has to render alienation natural (i.e. universal, ahistorical, nothingness). Because alienation is the fundamental condition of living labour dominated by dead labour under capitalist social relations, real-world Marxism seeks to end alienation through revolutionary practice. Derrida must abstract from capitalist social relations and naturalise the ego as an historically indeterminate actor capable of realising its "self" through its authentic pure actions. To do so he has to engage in some idealist ghost-busting. The real "specter" of alienated labour separates society from nature. This is expressed as a split between labour and its value, between labour-power as use-value and exchange-value. Thus Derrida must reject the "ghosts" of "labour", "value" and "class".

By rejecting the ontology of living labour as the source of determinate social life Derrida removes at one stroke any objective being as presence. Next the capital-labour relation is obliterated as "metaphysics". The historical unity of production and consumption is broken, and restored only in an alienated ie. supernatural or idealist form, as the irreducible, pre-social act. This break in the unity of production and consumption

can take many forms, deceptively different. In one sense the whole of Western Marxism can be understood as the result of "freezing" the moments in this unity.⁸⁹ But there is common metaphysic -- that of the alienated labouring social self. The subject is dominated in thought by an alien absence (the determinate "other" of dead labour) which is impossible to recover -- as fetishised labour, love, or power -- except in an alienated form.

In response to his critics Derrida's attempt to claim adherence to the notion of class is pathetic. *"I believe that an interest in what the concept of class struggle aimed at, an interest in analysing conflicts in social forces, is still absolutely indispensable...But I'm not sure that the concept of class, as its been inherited is the best instrument for those activities, unless it is considerably differentiated"*.⁹⁰ This is a banal Weberian, social democratic, liberal "Third way" even, lipservice to class shorn of "inheritance", i.e. social relations, contradictions, etc.

But Derrida is not free indulge in mysticism as a purely ideological exercise or publicity stunt. He senses that Marxism is not quite "post". The contradictions of capitalism manifest themselves in mounting political, social and cultural crises. In its attempts to overcome the contradiction between use-value and exchange-value, the market tries to commodify everything, including its own ideological legitimation, thereby transposing the crisis directly from the infrastructure to the superstructure with less and less mediation. As the crisis invades the "lifeworld", i.e. culture, the ideological expressions become more and more extreme -- e.g. hyperreality -- echoing Marx's prophetic words about "idealising phrases, conscious illusion, deliberate hypocrisy".⁹¹

This is not just any old anarchy. The impending crisis appears to Derrida as the return of Marx's ghost. Derrida re-reads the *Communist Manifesto* and realises he has to lay the ghost.⁹² The specter of communism is still haunting the world. The specter must be *conjured* away.⁹³ The academic factory scavenges the *corpus* of Marx after the death of "defacto Marxism". To *certify* the death. "Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with it its hopes, its discourse, its theories, and its practices. It says: long live capitalism, long live the market, here's to the survival of economic and political liberalism!"⁹⁴ The incantations are necessary to keep the 10 plagues of the new world disorder at bay.⁹⁵ But they will not work because they cannot identify the ghost. The real ghost has to be faced and a "new international" or "association of egos" created to conjure away the ghost.

Consider Derrida's interesting excursion on the academic neutralisation (cushioning operation) of Marx.

Why insist on imminence, on urgency and injunction, on all that which in them does not wait? In order to try to remove what we are going to say from what risks happening, if we judge by the many signs, to Marx's work today, which is to say also to his injunction. What risks happening is that one will try to play Marx off against Marxism so as to neutralise, or at any rate muffle the political imperative in the untroubled exegesis of a

classified work. One can sense a coming fashion or stylishness in this regard in the culture and more precisely in the university. And what is there to worry about here? Why fear what may also become a cushioning operation? This recent stereotype would be destined, whether one wishes it or not, to depoliticise profoundly the *Marxist reference*, to do its best, by putting on a tolerant face, to neutralise a potential force, first of all by enervating a *corpus*, by silencing in it the revolt [the *return* is acceptable provided that the *revolt*, which initially inspired uprising, indignation, insurrection, revolutionary momentum, does not come back]. People would be ready to accept the return of Marx or the return to Marx, on the condition that a silence is maintained about Marx's injunction not just to decipher but to act and to make the deciphering [the interpretation] into a transformation that "changes the world". In the name of an old concept of reading, such an ongoing neutralisation would attempt to conjure away danger: now that Marx is dead, and especially now that Marxism seems to be in rapid decomposition, some people seem to say, we are going to be able to concern ourselves with Marx without being bothered -- by the Marxists and, why not, by Marx himself, that is, by a ghost that goes on speaking. We'll treat him calmly, objectively, without bias: according to the academic rules, in the University, in the library, in colloquia! We'll do it systematically, by respecting the norms of hermeneutical, philological, philosophical exegesis. If one listens closely, one already hears whispered: "Marx, you see, was despite everything a philosopher like any other; what is more [and one can say this now that so many Marxists have fallen silent], he was a *great philosopher* who deserves to figure on the list of those works we assign for study and from which he has been banned for too long. He doesn't belong to the communists, to the Marxists, to the parties; he ought to figure within our great canon of Western political philosophy. Return to Marx, let's finally read him as a great philosopher." We have heard this and we will hear it again.

It is something altogether other that I wish to attempt here as I turn or return to Marx. It is "something other" to the point that I will have occasion instead, and this will not be only for lack of time and space, to insist even more on what commands us today, without delay, to do everything we can so as to avoid the neutralising anaesthesia of a new theoreticism, and to prevent a philosophico-philological return to Marx from prevailing. Let us spell things out, let us insist: to do everything we can so that it does not *prevail*, but not to avoid its taking place, because it remains just as necessary. This will cause me, for the moment to give priority to the political gesture I am making here, at the opening of a colloquium, and to leave more or less in the state of a program and of schematic indications the work of philosophical exegesis, and all the "scholarship" that this "position-taking" today, still requires.[96](#)

Derrida doesn't want to leave Marx as merely an academic commodity. He knows that is no way to bu(r)y Marx (how many proletarian militants will pass through the academies of the new millennium?). Rather he wants to embrace a re-born Marx as a mass commodity. He wants to honour *one spirit out of a number of Marx's spirits* for deconstruction. It is the spirit of rebellion, of the moral *injunction, of individuals to aspire to the pure act of salvation*. Derrida sees that capitalism cannot be contained inside discourse. Capitalism's contradictions cannot be ignored, so its apologetics have to be indirect. He needs transcendental signifiers for mass ecological destruction, genocide, poverty, disease etc. So Derrida buys Marx cheap, i.e. after his death and burial.⁹⁷ He then excavates only the spirit he wants. He "disappears" those spirits he doesn't want -- the totalising *method*, the "dogmatics", the party, the old-fashioned workers international. Then sells Marx dear as a emancipatory/religious icon by diminishing Marxism to a utopian anarcho/socialism, and then packaging it as the "promised land". Derrida's reduction of the "spirit of Marx" to a "messianic eschatology" and the "spirit of Marxist critique" is repacked as the commodity of "radical deconstruction".⁹⁸ This becomes clear in the section written in response to the cynics who justifiably ask, "You picked a good time to Salute Marx".

Which Marxist Spirit, then? It is easy to imagine why we will not please the Marxists, and still less all the others, by insisting in this way on the *spirit of Marxism*, especially if we let it be understood that we intend to understand *spirits* in the plural and in the sense of specters, of untimely specters that one must not chase away but sort out, critique, keep close by, and allow to come back. And of course, we must never hide from the fact that the principle of selectivity which will have to guide and hierarchise among the "spirits" will fatally exclude in its turn. It will even annihilate, by watching (over) its ancestors rather than (over) certain others. . .

. . . To continue to take inspiration from Marxism would be to keep faith with what has always made of Marxism in principle and first of all a *radical* critique, namely a procedure ready to undertake self-critique. This critique *wants itself* to be in principle and explicitly open to its own transformation, re-evaluation, self-reinterpretation. Such a critical "wanting-itself" necessarily takes root, it is involved in a ground that is not yet critical, even if it is not, not yet, pre-critical. This latter spirit is more than a style, even though it is also a style. It is the heir to a spirit of the Enlightenment, which must not be renounced. We would distinguish this spirit from other spirits of Marxism, those that rivet it to the body of Marxist doctrine, to its supposed systemic, metaphysical, or ontological totality (notably to its "dialectical method" or to "dialectical materialism"), to its fundamental concepts of labor, mode of production, social class, and consequently to the whole history of its apparatuses (projected or real: the Internationals of the labour movement, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the single party, the State, and finally the totalitarian monstrosity). . . ⁹⁹

That spirit of Marxism that is *radical* and able to critique itself, is the spirit that Derrida wants to recover and use today as a radical deconstruction of the other "spirits of Marxism" that are not *radical* in this sense. To be radical thus means a constant re-styling of the commodity-Marxism. The "fundamental concepts" of labour (and labour value?) must go. No doubt they are spirits that have too much proletarian resonance today in the world of "plagues". Mode of production is too metaphysical. It betrays the "spirit" of "dialectical method".¹⁰⁰ Social class and the state as an instrument of class rule? How can a class rule?! No! says the radical apologist of plague-ridden capitalism -- no class can rule because class is a ghost, which cohabits with other ghosts such as labour and value. Such "spirits" must be "fatally excluded".

To critique, to call for interminable self-critique is still to distinguish between everything or almost everything. Now there is a spirit of Marxism, which I will never be ready to renounce, it is not only a critical idea or the questioning stance (a consistent deconstruction must insist on them even as it also learns that this is not the last or first word). It is even more a certain emancipatory and *messianic* affirmation, a certain experience of the promise that one can try to liberate from any dogmatics and even from any metaphysico-religious determination, from any *messianism*. . . .

But more than self-criticism (i.e. deconstruction) is the "emancipatory" promise to liberate one from these ghosts of "determinism", from a "messianic affirmation" that one can be saved by knowledge and rational action. Instead there is nothing but "interminable self-critique" and an irrational messianicity of individual salvation. Here, Derrida expresses his debt to the earlier philosophers of self-emancipation from Nietzsche to Heidegger.¹⁰¹ The problem now however, is to reclaim Marx, the most damning critic of irrationalism and of its most bizarre disciple Stirner, as an indirect apologist for irrationalism.

. . . Now, this gesture of fidelity to a certain spirit of Marxism is a responsibility incumbent in principle, to be sure, on anyone. Barely deserving the name community, the new International belongs only to anonymity. But this responsibility appears today, at least within the limits of an intellectual and academic field, to return more imperatively and, let us say so as not to exclude anyone, by priority, in urgency to those who, during the last decades, managed to resist a certain hegemony of the Marxist dogma, indeed of its metaphysics, in its political or theoretical forms. And still more particularly to those who have insisted on conceiving and on practicing this resistance without showing any leniency towards reactionary, conservative, or neo-conservative, anti-scientific or obscurantist temptations, to those who, on the contrary have ceaselessly proceeded in a hyper-critical fashion, I will dare to say in a deconstructive fashion, in the name of a new Enlightenment for the century to come. And without renouncing an ideal of democracy and emancipation, but rather by trying to think it and to put it to work otherwise. . . .¹⁰²

Derrida thinks his own political credentials for "putting to work" the "ideal of democracy and emancipation", in a "deconstructive fashion" are good. He claims that the "end of communist Marxism did not await the recent collapse of the USSR . . . all that started at the beginning of the '50s . . . the eschatological themes of the 'end of history', of the 'end of Marxism', of the 'end of philosophy', of the 'ends of man', of the 'last man' and so forth were, in the '50's, that is forty years ago, our daily bread". Deconstruction, he says, was born out of this "totalitarian terror" of Stalinism and neo-Stalinism. So deconstruction of the totalising "philosophical responses" includes Marxism in the name of "differance". "The originary performativity that does not conform to pre-existing conventions . . . In the incoercible differance the here-now unfurls. No differance without alterity, no alterity without singularity, no singularity without the here-now".[103](#)

Here Derrida is reproducing the core of Stirner's "unique", the "freedom" to act in the absence of coercive, totalising, social relations. Derrida does not see that the individual uncoerced act is not "against" totalitarianism. Rather it is the expression of the "unfreedom" of the alienated bourgeois subject. It is the ghost in the mirror, the ghost on the rampart, the absence separated from presence. Deconstructed, performativity is the "practice" of the alienated capitalist individual. It is "rebellion" as "sentimentality and bragging". Here we have the "cushioning exercise" which poses the rebel spirit of Marx as his true spirit, to render the socially determinate as the irreducible "here-now". He "sells" the revolution in the name of the rebellion of the "association of egoists".[104](#)

Marx anticipates Derrida's "here/now" performativity in his critique of Stirner's "unique":

Individuals have always and in all circumstances "proceeded *from themselves*", but since they were not *unique* in the sense of not needing any connections with one another, and since their *needs*, consequently their nature, and the method of satisfying their needs, connected them with one another (relations between the sexes, exchange division of labour), they *had* to enter into relations with one another. Moreover, since they entered into intercourse with one another not as pure egos, but as individuals at a definite stage of development of their productive forces and requirements, and since this intercourse, in its turn, determined production and needs, it was therefore, precisely the personal, individual behaviour of individuals, their behaviour to one another as individuals, that created the existing relations and daily reproduces them anew.[105](#)

The New International

What is the meaning of Derrida's "new International" as his answer to globalisation and its 10 plagues? Derrida invokes, as a *counter-conjuration*, a worldwide social movement with no organising features to reform international law! As an idealist fix, this is no more than a hollow call for social justice which joins with Soros and Giddens et al. in appeals to a spontaneous "millenarian" power of bourgeois citizens to fight

"responsibly" for a democratic capitalism against the totalitarian spectres of speculative capital, fundamentalist ideas and totalising dogma.

But without necessarily subscribing to the whole Marxist discourse (which moreover, is complex, evolving, heterogeneous) on the State and its appropriation by a dominant class, on the distinction between State power and State apparatus, on the end of the political, on "the end of politics", or on the withering away of the State, and, on the other hand without suspecting the juridical ideas in itself, one may still find inspiration in the Marxist "spirit" to criticise the presumed autonomy of the juridical and to denounce endlessly the de facto take-over of international authorities by powerful National-states, by concentrations of techno-scientific capital, symbolic capital, and financial capital, of State capital and private capital. A "new international" is being sought through these crises of international law; it already denounces the limits of a discourse on human rights that will remain inadequate, sometimes hypocritical, and in any case formalistic and inconsistent with itself as long as the law of the market, the "foreign debt", the inequality of techno-scientific, military, and economic development maintain an effective inequality as monstrous as that which prevails today, to a greater extent than ever in the history of humanity. For it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelise in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realised itself as the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of humanity. Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the "end of ideologies" and the end of the great emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, never have so many men, women, and children been subjugated, starved, or exterminated on the earth. . . .

The concerns of the "new International" are those of liberal democracy -- poverty, ecological destruction, crimes against humanity -- and so on -- which are caused by the "de facto takeover of international authorities" by nation states and capital. Thus the authority of the law which is being 'taken over' is that which represents bourgeois right as freedom and equality ie. bourgeois citizenship rights and civil society. While Soros can talk of the aberration of finance capital, and Giddens of fundamentalism against citizenship, Derrida provides the political philosophy of the hyper-decadent bourgeois ego. Like Stirner in his day Derrida conjures up a philosophical apology for private property and the "freedom of labour". And as with any common liberal it seems that Derrida subscribes to such norms and conventions of bourgeois society when he defends them against the challenge of "crimes" and "oppression" of capital. However, in rejecting the method and theory of Marxism as "totalitarian", and wishing to renew Marxism as a

"weak messianic power", Derrida is advocating a "new" reformist International that subscribes to an ideology of distributional social justice posing as "natural" justice. Since this is the way the fetishised social relations of capital appear in daily life, there is no necessity for a "new International" which is organised around a revolutionary programme.

. . . The "New International" is not only that which is seeking a new international law through these crimes. It is a link of affinity, suffering, and hope, a still discreet, almost secret link, as it was around 1848, but more and more visible, we have more than one sign of it. It is an untimely link, without status, without title, and without name, barely public even if it is not clandestine, without contract, "out of joint", without coordination, without party, without country, without national community (International before, across, and beyond any national determination), without co-citizenship, without common belonging to a class. The name of the new International is given here to what calls to the friendship of an alliance without institution among those who, even if they no longer believe or never believed in the socialist-Marxist International, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the messiano-eschatological role of the universal union of the spirits of Marx or Marxism (they now know that there is *more than one*) and in order to ally themselves, in a new, concrete, and real way, even if this alliance no longer takes the form of a party or a workers' international, but rather of a kind of counter-conjuration, in the (theoretical and practical) critique of the state of international law, the concepts of State and nation, and so forth: in order to renew this critique, and especially to radicalise it.[106](#)

Derrida's new International is nothing like a Marxist international and more like a Masonic order.[107](#) By basing itself on the ideal to which capitalism aspires in its fetishised form of equal exchange, he seeks to render this ideal real for each individual. The spirit of Marx he has recovered is actually that of Stirner's "free ego" who is alienated not by society-in-general, but by capitalist social relations. To express this freedom as a intellectual critique or a "radicalisation" of Marxism is a retreat to a subjective idealism in which the bourgeois subject aspiring to Stirner's "unique" remains trapped in performativity as consumption of its alienated identity.

So in his misappropriation of Marx, Derrida offers the young idealists of today a brand of anarchism they can consume in the belief that their actions constitute a rebellion for "democracy" and "emancipation" against the dehumanising norms and conventions that alienate them. Just as Stirner's "association of egoists" was a figment of his "Thought", Derrida's new International has the potential to divert a new generation of alienated youth into discursive acts against the symptomatic phrases rather than the materialist substance of capitalist crisis.

In his response to his critics who deride the idea of an "international" without class he replies:

Whenever I speak of the New International in *Specters of Marx*, emphasising that, in it, solidarity or alliance should not depend, fundamentally and in the final analysis, on class affiliation, this in no wise signifies, for me, the disappearance of "classes" or the attenuation of conflicts connected with "class" differences or oppositions (or, at least, differences or oppositions based on the new configurations of social forces for which I do in fact believe that we need new concepts and therefore, perhaps new names as well) . . . the disappearance of power relations, or relations of social domination At issue is, simply, another dimension of analysis and political commitment, one that cuts across social differences and oppositions of social forces (what one used to call, simplifying, "classes"). I would not say that such a dimension (for instance, the dimension of social, national, or international classes, or political struggles within nation states, problems of citizenship or nationality, or party strategies, etc.) is *superior or inferior, a primary or a secondary concern, fundamental or not. All that depends*, at every instant, on new assessments of what is urgent in, first and foremost, *singular* situations and of their structural implications. For such an assessment, there is, by definition, no pre-existing criterion or absolute calculability; analysis must begin anew every day everywhere, without ever being guaranteed by prior knowledge. It is on this condition, on the condition constituted by this injunction, that there is, *if* there is, action, decision and political responsibility -- repoliticization.[108](#)

In other words, the term "international" is a *mystique*. It covers for a nihilistic cult. Its Marxist meaning is inverted; just as messianicity is messianism without a *given* messiah - - because everyone is one's *own* messiah. There is no prior knowledge that can guide any collective action because that pre-anything (society, religion, etc.) is spectral, is the unfilled "void". There are only irreducible acts which individuals perform at any given moment by personally attempting to calculate, on the spot as it were, which of many "dimensions" or "forces" immediately concern them, "responsibly" and in the name of "justice" (whose gift?). If there is one name to apply to this contingent conjunction of "forces" which tries to "name" the "new" it is as I have argued above, *performativity*.[109](#) Moreover, as I set out to prove, Derrida's performativity is the idealist philosophical license for the political/social concept of *reflexivity* as developed by Soros and Giddens to express their abstract understanding of the 'structure-agency' problem in the new global economy.[110](#) Teamed-up, as *performo-reflexivity*, we could not get a better prescription for "demobilising" and "depoliticising" the masses in the face of the current world crisis of capitalism.

Marxist Dialectics

Yet as the crisis of "very late" capitalism looms larger it cannot be contained by such idealist fixes.[111](#) Despite the hype, capitalism that is in dis-order and dis-equilibrium, and in terror of its own ghosts (this time the real ghosts of dead labour) is under threat of a materialist re-haunting. The victory of the more market messianicity is clamped in the

jaws of contradiction. The neo-Hegelian infinite liberal democracy cannot paper over the cracks in the world economy. The resident contradiction between use-value and exchange-value asserts itself constantly in the form of the rejection of Say's law that supply creates demand -- that the market is the best/only historic mechanism to meet the needs of consumers. Needs are "out of joint" with profits. There is no "jointure" if consumers have no income with which to consume to meet their needs/justice. What pure gifts are possible when poverty cannot be commodified? So how can the Soros/Derrida/Giddens "new International" of the "new, new right" be the answer to underconsumption?

Underconsumption was the problem that Keynes recognised as the result of insufficient investment. There was no necessary connection between demand and supply because capitalists were governed by "animal spirits" which determined whether or not they would invest in production to supply demand. Keynes solution was for the state to take responsibility for productive investment [consumption] when the capitalists did not. What Keynes failed to recognise was that capitalists' motivation for investment did not depend upon their atavistic ahistorical "animal spirits", but the rate of profit.[112](#)

Keynes was unable to explain why Say's law broke down. Capitalists only produce to meet demand if they can make a profit. This is not a problem of under-consumption that can be fixed by boosting consumption, but a problem of overproduction of capital that cannot be reinvested profitably. The reason for this is that consumer needs are not sovereign under capitalism, profits are. In order to produce capitalists want to make profits and they can only do this if they can expropriate sufficient surplus-value during production to be realised as profits. They will not permit their profits as private property to be socialised by fiat or by stealth. And while this is the case the messianic Hayek and Co can still argue for the inherent superiority of the market. Bourgeois social relations and their legal forms, property rights, set systemic limits to the possibility of distributional/cultural/legal reforms.

Hence modern capitalist society is 'reflexive' only to the point where it generates a spontaneous defensive reflex from the owners of the 'structure' of private property against the 'agency' of the rampant oppressed. Giddens' attempts to supplant "productivism" with a "post-scarcity order" will also come up against this limit.[113](#) Given the need to accumulate capital, capitalists have to constantly increase the rate of exploitation (expropriation of relative surplus-value) and to do this they are driven to increase their investment in constant capital (machines etc) to increase labour productivity. This is what Marx called relative surplus value expropriation. This has the effect of super-exploiting a relatively declining proportion of workers, and throwing an ever-larger number of workers onto the industrial scrap-heap. As a result capitalism produces more and more efficiently with less and less necessary labour time in order to increase relative surplus value.

This creates an obvious problem. Profits begin to fall if the rate of surplus value does not rise fast enough to keep up with the rising organic composition (the Tendency for the Rate of Profit to Fall -- TRPF -- which Marx called the most important law of political

economy). This is the real cause of capitalist instability and disequilibrium. But in addition to this, and with fatal consequences for Say's law, proportionately less value is expended on variable capital (wages) and is available for wage-good consumption. So capitalism digs its own grave by creating a working class that becomes increasingly impoverished and unable to consume what it needs without revolutionising the relations of production.[114](#)

The market therefore cannot be fixed by state intervention to compensate for this falling demand because it cannot prevent the fundamental cause of overproduction in the first place. Keynesian demand management, which involves boosting state spending and working class consumption, exacerbates the problem of falling profits because taxes are a drain on profits! The fatal flaw of the market, (and of all forms of market socialism that are all attempts at state intervention to suppress the TRPF) is that it is integrated into the circuit of capital at the point of exchange. It cannot be cut loose and doctored to transform the circuit of capital, since in the last analysis the circuit of capital is determined by production and production relations.[115](#)

What does this mean for the ideology of more-market as the "historic best" at matching supply with demand? It makes all the rhetoric surrounding the superiority of the market over planning so much hot air. Hayek's fundamental point that only the market can coordinate the information necessary to match supply with demand falls flat when demand falls flat.[116](#) The demand factor is now seen to be not the result of a natural market-freedom to spend a "factor" income. Rather demand results from a socially alienated and historically conditioned residual income, the value of the wage, in the case of the vast majority of producers, or revenue plus profit as expropriated value in the case of the tiny minority or exploiters. But consumption depends upon production. The production of market mythology will continue, but its consumption will fall as demand collapses. As the masses are starved of consumption, the ghosts of alienated labour and the fetishised world-view will cease to hold them in thrall. It will no longer be possible for indirect apologetics of Derrida and Co. to keep up the lie of the (l)awful legitimacy of the market.

In the face of the contemporary crisis of capitalist production it becomes more difficult to maintain the false split in reality between ideal fixes and material roots. The symptoms collapse in on the cause. The discourse is exposed as dis-cause. Crisis theory formerly retracted into discourse without even the signifiers of the contradiction -- use-value/exchange-value -- explodes back into consciousness. And despite all his efforts to de-materialise Marx into the idealist Max Stirner, Derrida cannot suppress this fundamental contradiction of signified dead labour carried on the backs of living labour coming back to haunt him.

In other words there is more to "life" outside discourse than the "void". And there is more to this "void" than fetishised appearances (including Derrida's "speeches" to the masses).[117](#) Derrida's recuperation of Marx stops at exchange relations. The 10 plagues are but manifestations of capitalist ills that can be Stirnerised without totalising transformations. But the real predicate that Stirner fears -- the ghostly contradiction

between use-value and exchange-value -- is in reality objective. It manifests itself both objectively and subjectively as a dialectical process that cannot be suppressed by idealist contemplation/interpretation. And despite their wilful attempts to reject history as dialectics, and to substitute the unique ego, both Stirner and Derrida have a place in the division of labour already set aside for them. It is as bourgeois intellectuals engaged in indirect apologetics of pre/post-Marxism.[118](#)

This proves, as Trotsky said, that if we don't "recognise" dialectics, dialectics nevertheless "recognises" us: "that is, extends its sway" over us.[119](#) In the same way that the "visor effect" blocks off the ghost's identity yet the ghost sees right through us.[120](#) So in the end, it is dialectics -- finally the contradiction between use-value and exchange value -- that is the ghost that haunts capitalism. No amount of tinkering with the system will stop the capitalist market as a historically time bound mechanism from collapse (though if the proletariat pushes it will not fall in on them). The market and the new millenarian hype cannot magic away the "specter" of Marxism. It cannot be *conjured* out of existence. The Dialectic is the ghost's *re-visit*. *The Spectre of Marx re-materialises Derrida's hauntology*.

Millenerianism or Materialism?

Today, after more than 200 years of capitalist expansion all over the world, we face the dawn of another century. Will it herald a conflict free age of social advancement, or an age of growing social disorder and international class conflict? By itself a new century offers no hope to the billions of workers and peasants whose lives are ruined or destroyed by the ruthless capitalist market. It will only offer hope, if they can shed all their religious and superstitious illusions about the past and the future, and destroy the social system that denies them hope in this life. The promise of the new millennium for the masses is not the re-born Marx of Derrida, but the dialectical method of the *German Ideology* and of Lukacs, Lenin and Trotsky. Only such a real-world Marxism shows them how to root out the causes of their poverty and misery and to overcome their alienation from themselves and others and to take the power over production and society in the name of humanity.

I think that Marx was already a materialist dialectician in the *German Ideology*.[121](#) Not in spite of, but because of Hegel. This shows up clearly in his critique of Stirner. The contradiction of the relations and forces of production was already at the centre of Marx's method. Unfortunately Western Marxism aping radical bourgeois ideology split and fetishised the forces or the relations into a one-sided fatalism or voluntarism. This is the trap of Western Marxism laid by the petty bourgeois intellectuals with no life in the class struggle but who want to (p)reserve an indeterminate cultural space for their own historical "com-edification". Benjamin was a victim of this failure of dialectics, but no more than the various "communist" internationals that failed to apply materialist dialectics and thus the method of Bolshevism. Within this tradition only Lukacs powerful analysis of bourgeois irrationalism (that splits subject and object) succeeds in uniting theory and practice in the party.[122](#)

Lenin and Trotsky revived the dialectical method in the form of the revolutionary party. The contradictory unity of objective and subjective reality was realised in the revolutionary programme by means of revolutionary practice. Here we find bourgeois idealism subjected to the revolutionary critique of practice. The weapon of critique becomes the critique of weapons. Freedom is not posed as the fear of necessity expressed as "metaphysics" only to be 'overcome' by the authentic irrational acts of isolated individuals. Real freedom is the recognition of necessity. First, as the theory of the historic social relations which determine social life and which alienate bourgeois subjects from their labour and from themselves. Second, as the practice that allows necessity to be transcended by social revolution.[123](#)

We do not have to let capitalism destroy the planet. We can take power, expropriate the expropriators, and collectively plan to create a better, freer, and equal society called socialism. But to do this we need to mobilise and organise the working class. Not in Derrida's "spirit of Marxism" but against it, taking stock of Marx's method, recuperating the methods of the Bolsheviks and taking state power. This is both necessary and possible, since the contradictions of capitalism make busting the ghost of alienation and collectivising dead labour the only means of survival as well as emancipation of living labour.

Notes

[1](#) Derrida, 1999, "Marx and Sons" in Sprinker (ed.) *Ghostly Demarcations*. This is an astonishing appeal to the banished universals of psychoanalysis as motivating his marxist critics.

[2](#) Soros, 1998.

[3](#) Most recently in Giddens, 1998.

[4](#) *New Statesman*, October 31, 1997. See also the interview with Giddens which talks about his influence on Blair's New Labour Party and his search for a term which expresses the essence of the "global, post-traditional, market society", in *The New Yorker*, October 6, 1997.

[5](#) Giddens, 1995:1.

[6](#) The role of bourgeois intellectuals as apologists for capitalism at its various stages of development is the basic premise of Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*, and of Lukac's in *The Destruction of Reason*. I develop this theme in this paper.

[7](#) Despite his reputation to the contrary, Derrida is a philosopher with his own "metavocabulary" (Rorty, 1991:94) and what's more presents himself as the interpreter of a "real" world (Norris, 1997:106). The only question is: what is this reality? Here I argue that it is the fetishised reality of exchange relations. Cf. Spivak (1995) on Derrida's confusion between "commercial" and "industrial" capital. See Ahmad on Derrida's affinity with the "Third Way".

[8](#) 1994:63-64.

[9](#) Ibid xix; 4.

[10](#) Ibid 13.

[11](#) Ibid 13. See Lewis on Derrida's 'metaphysical' and "psychological" method of interpreting law, international law and nationalism.

[12](#) For example in Sprinker (1999) both Negri and Hamacher argue for qualitative transformations in capitalism which partially endorse Derrida's project.

[13](#) 1994: 13.

[14](#) I agree with Ahmad (1994) that Derrida's motives for reclaiming Marx are suspect. Why didn't Derrida challenge the "dogmatics" with his "spirit" of Marx when it could have mattered? Why mourn the death of Marxism when he never loved it anyway? And why condemn totalitarian Marxism and keep quiet about the right-wing uses of deconstruction? But I argue that there is more to Derrida's "recouping" of Marx than a re-branding of deconstruction to distinguish itself from the new right.

[15](#) Op.cit. 13-14.

[16](#) "In proposing this title, *Specters of Marx*, I was initially thinking of all the forms of a certain haunting obsession that seems to me to organise the *dominant* influence on discourse today. At a time when the new world disorder is attempting to install its neo-capitalism and neo-liberalism, no disavowal has managed to rid itself of all of Marx's ghosts. Hegemony still organises the repression and thus the confirmation of a haunting. Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony". (37)

[17](#) But this is only a symptom -- an "appearance" of "times out of joint". Things need to be "put right" and made "lawful". But "dead labour" (i.e., abstract labour that is embodied in the value of commodities) cannot be made "lawful".

[18](#) Why Derrida? His influence is wider than the academy, as a recent visit to Australia and New Zealand showed, Derrida drew between 1000 and 2000 at public lectures and got exposure in the national media. It seems that Derrida provides a "speculative philosophical" anti-foundationism which is the necessary premise of "Third Way" post-marxist and post-modernist politics. Anticipating this, Marx argues that "speculative

history" requires a shift from the mysticism of the "concept" to the materialism of the person as "self-consciousness", and to "thinkers", "philosophers" etc. who represent the "concept" in history, the "ideologists who . . . are understood as the manufacturers of history, as the "council of guardians", as the rulers". (Marx and Engels, 1976:70)

19 I use "dead" labour in the sense of past "living labour" that becomes "objectified labour", "crystallised" "congealed labour-time" etc. (see Marx, 1976:129-131) now represented as "constant capital", combined with current "living labour" or "variable capital" to set in motion the further production of value (Marx, 1981:243-245).

20 Of course the performativity of alienated consumption appears as the opposite, as the authentic realisation (sovereignty) of the individual who is freed from necessary labour.

21 Marx, 1973:157. Also Marx, 1976:163-177. Money is the highest expression of alienated labour. On the surface it seems that Derrida understands this. However, on further inspection, the closest he comes to it is to recognise that money is the alienated form of "property" -- not specifically labour value.

22 Derrida is correct to see Fukuyama as presenting a Hegelian "gospel", which echoes Kojève, that the US and the EU is "the embodiment of Hegel's state of universal recognition" (1994:61).

23 Ibid p. 62-65.

24 See Derrida's comments on use-value as ideology and ontology in "Marx and Sons" (1999). By mystifying use-values, Derrida renders the whole Hegelian/Marxism bag of tricks of dialectical contradiction non-existent (haunted).

25 Lukács defines "indirect apologetics": ". . . Whereas direct apologetics was at pains to fudge the contradictions in the capitalist system, to refute them with sophistry and to be rid of them, indirect apologetics proceeded from these very contradictions, acknowledging their existence and their irrefutability as facts, while nonetheless putting an interpretation on them which helped to confirm capitalism. Whereas direct apologetics was at pains to depict capitalism as the best of all orders, as the last, outstanding peak of mankind's evolution, indirect apologetics crudely elaborated the bad sides, the atrocities of capitalism, but explained them as attributes not of capitalism but of all human existence and existence in general. From this it necessarily follows that a struggle against these atrocities not only appears doomed from the start but signifies and absurdity, viz., a self-dissolution of the essentially human" (1980:202-3). Also: "In the ethical realm, indirect apologetics chiefly discredited social action in general, and in particular any tendency to want to change society. . . . Indirect apologetics in ethics have the task of steering intellectuals, sometimes rebellious ones, back to the path of the bourgeoisie's reactionary development, while preserving all their intellectual and moral pretensions to a superior ease in this respect (1980:295).

[26](#) The recent appearance of Sprinker's (1999) "symposium" on Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, is disappointing. Of those contributors who are clearly critical of Derrida, there is little that is new. Ahmad's promise to devote a longer reply to Derrida has yet to appear. Lewis reproduces much of Callincos' critique. Derrida's response is much more interesting, including as it does Spivak (who does not appear in Sprinker's book), in his petty and pathetic response in "Marx and Sons".

[27](#) 1995:37.

[28](#) Eagleton, 1986:117.

[29](#) 1993:108.

[30](#) Like Max Weber, when push comes to shove, Derrida is a vulgar marginalist. On Weber see Lukacs, 1980, and Clarke, 1982.

[31](#) 1993:119.

[32](#) Cf. Ebert who accuses Spivak of "substituting discursive politics" for the transformation of social relations, 1996:291-293.

[33](#) Derrida, 1994:55. It is clear that Jameson approves of Derrida's concept of the "messianic" as a realm of "contingency" for the individual undetermined by social relations etc. I argue below that this is a consequence of Jameson's adopting of Mandel's eclectic model of Marxist economics which separates production from consumption, and more recently Arrighi (1994) who over time separates speculative capital from production. This primes Jameson to provide a "left cover" for the post-Marxist "cultural turn" (1998).

[34](#) 1994:108-109.

[35](#) 1996: 40.

[36](#) See Jameson, 1991: 3, 35, 53 and especially 400.

[37](#) See Paul Mattick's (1981) critique of *Late Capitalism*. "Mandel adheres to two distinct theories of crisis at once: the overaccumulation theory, which is based on the relations of production, and the overproduction theory, which is based on the difficulties of realizing surplus value due to insufficient demand for consumer goods" (200). That aspect of Mandel's theory which allows increasing consumption to partially compensate for overproduction, becomes the basis for his theory of the "Third Phase" of capitalist development, or "Late Capitalism". Mandel's consumption theory of crisis is that which is then used by Jameson to account for post-modernity as the commodification of culture. It is a short step from this theory to a messianic theory of cultural resistance as acts of virtuality in the face of consumer choice.

[38](#) By this I mean that Arrighi separates out the sphere of money circulation (M-M') from production, not merely in a real time circuit, M-C-M', where excess money capital which cannot be invested profitably results in speculation, but historically. Each hegemonic power goes through a period of productive development followed by a period of financial speculation. This is a retreat from Mandel's position which conflates crises of overproduction and underconsumption where the circuit of capital is potentially arrested at the consumption moment, to a position in which financial speculation in the sphere of circulation (M-M') creates a crisis that arrests the circuit of capital. See Robert Polin's (1996) review of *The Long Twentieth Century*. As Polin puts it, "Arrighi never explicitly poses the most basic question about the M M ' circuit, which is, where do the profits come from if not from the production and exchange of commodities?" (115).

[39](#) See Jameson "Culture and Finance Capital" in Jameson, 1998. Note the echo of this "overaccumulation" of money theory of capitalist crisis in Derrida's "epidemic of overproduction", 1994:63.

[40](#) 1996:33.

[41](#) 1994:10.

[42](#) I see Derrida as following in the tradition of irrationalist philosophy of which Nietzsche and Heidegger are part. He is idealist in rejecting an objective reality outside consciousness. His idealism is subjective, as it is the individual consciousness rather than some external transcendental consciousness that gives meaning to being. For an excellent account of the role of Nietzsche and Heidegger as "indirect apologists" for capitalism against socialism in the irrationalist tradition, see Lukacs, 1980.

[43](#) (1974: 25-28).

[44](#) Derrida has no answer to the social causes of injustice. He argues that "justice" must come not from vengeance as with Hamlet, not from market exchange, but from pure gifts (presents) in a social "desert". Here Derrida imagines that redistributive justice can proceed on the basis of an absence of social content let alone social relations; otherwise, he says, "justice risks being reduced again to juridical-moral rules, norms, or representations, within an inevitable totalizing horizon (movement of adequate restitution, expiation, or reappropriation" (28). Cf Spivak, 1995: 77.

[45](#) Ibid 28-29. To attribute to Marx such views is quite a feat. It is the expression of a form of pious utopianism as we have seen. All the more utopian as the moral injunction to give what one does not have is not directed to those who can give some of what they have as charity. Derrida's problem is that he cannot find a way to achieve justice in the here/now for fear of "evil, expropriation, and injustice". But why fear what already exists in the historic social relations of capitalism? Because for Derrida the fear of the "inevitable totalising horizon" of dogmatic Marxism is much greater than the actually existing evil of capitalist expropriation and injustice. Marx did not counterpose the future ideal of the communist individual as the answer to capitalism today, but as the real

outcome of the collective knowledge, party organisation, and mateship of a revolutionary alliance to expropriate and socialise the 'dead labour' of capitalist property.

[46](#) Lukacs, 1980:255.

[47](#) "I on my part start from a presupposition in presupposing *myself*; but my presupposition does not struggle for its perfection like 'man struggling for his perfection', but only serves me to enjoy it and consume it. I consume my presupposition, and nothing else, and exist only in consuming it. But that presupposition is therefore not a presupposition at all: for, as I am the unique, I know nothing of the duality of a presupposing and presupposed ego (an 'incomplete' and a 'complete' ego or man); but this, that I consume myself, means only that I am. I do not presuppose myself, because I am every moment just positing or creating myself, and am I only by being not presupposed but posited, and, again, posited only in the moment when I posit myself; that is I am the creator and creature" (Stirner, 1995:135).

[48](#) Cf. Stirner's "self-determined" ego (Marx and Engels, 1976:308) and Derrida's notion of the self in Derrida, 1997:16-22 and 1998:304.

[49](#) I use the term "subjective idealism" here in the same sense as Lukacs. "The dissolution of Hegelianism, before Marx took the decisive step to the materialist overthrow of Hegelian dialectics, has the peculiarity that the attempts to break through the Hegelian barriers engendered a retrograde movement in these questions objectively. Bruno Bauer, in the effort to develop Hegelian dialectics further in a revolutionary way, lapsed into the extreme subjective idealism of a 'philosophy of self-consciousness'. By thus caricaturing - as the young Marx was already demonstrating at the time -- the subjectivist aspects of the *Phenomenology*, and by reducing Hegel to Fichte, he too eliminated the social and historical motives from dialectics and made them far more abstract than they were in Hegel himself; he thus de-historicised and de-socialised dialectics. This tendency reaches its climax which tilts over into the absurdly paradoxical with Stirner" (1980: 254-5). Cf Leopold's introduction to Stirner, 1995.

[50](#) Paterson, 1971: 107.

[51](#) Thomas, 1980; also Patterson, 1971 and Leopold, 1995.

[52](#) Marx and Engels, 1976:142.

[53](#) Ibid, 143.

[54](#) Thomas, 155.

[55](#) Ibid 142.

[56](#) Ibid 147.

[57](#) Marx clearly has a concept of historically specific social relations in *The German Ideology*. It arose from his break with the Feuerbach specifically in response to Stirner's critique of Feuerbach and Marx. "The more the normal form of intercourse [social relations] and with it the conditions of the ruling class, develop their contradiction to the advanced productive forces, and the greater the consequent discord within the ruling class itself as well as between it and the class ruled by it, the more fictitious, of course, becomes the consciousness which originally corresponded to this form of intercourse (i.e., it ceases to be the consciousness corresponding to this form of intercourse), and the more to the old traditional ideas of these relations of intercourse, in which actual private interests, etc., are expressed as universal interests, descend the level of mere idealising phrases, conscious illusion, deliberate hypocrisy. But the more their falsity is exposed by life, and the less meaning they have for consciousness itself, the more resolutely are they asserted, the more hypocritical, moral and holy becomes the language of this normal society" (Marx and Engels, 1976:310). Also: "That money is a necessary product of definite relations of production and intercourse and remains a "truth" so long as these relations exist -- this, of course is of no concern to a holy man like Saint Max, who raises his eyes towards heaven and turns his profane backside to the profane world" (ibid: 219). Cf Callinicos, 1985: 44-46.

[58](#) Marx and Engels, 1976: 97.

[59](#) Thomas, 146.

[60](#) Derrida, 1994:30.

[61](#) 1996: 40.

[62](#) Ibid: 38.

[63](#) Ahmed, 1994.

[64](#) Callinicos 1991. Cf Trotsky's position that the "degenerate workers' states" were a contradictory unity of workers property and stalinist state power which could only be resolved by political revolution or social counter-revolution (1972). Lewis (1999) repeats Callinicos' argument in more detail, charging Derrida with ignorance of "state capitalism". It is beyond the scope of this paper to further develop the significant differences between these contending positions. Nevertheless because Derrida's ignorance of Marxism is most profound on the question of method I don't think that the state capitalist position can possibly correct it.

[65](#) Compare Marx on Stirner's self-determination as "absence of determination" (Marx and Engels, 1976: 309) and Derrida on the messianic as "opening to the future or to the coming of the other as the advent of justice". This is a discursive fantasy where Derrida imagines a desert preceding "all determinate community, all positive religion . . . it would link pure singularities prior to any social or political determination, prior to all intersubjectivity, prior to the opposition between the sacred and the profane". Such a link

would allow a new respect and tolerance . . . without this desert in the desert, there would be neither act of faith, nor promise, nor future, nor expectancy without expectation of death and of the other, nor relation to the singularity of the other" (1998:16-22).

[66](#) Callinicos' rejects commodity fetishism on philosophical and political grounds. Philosophically, he rejects any necessary link between social relations and consciousness, and specifically a link between exchange relations and bourgeois ideology. Thus the whole basis of Marx critique of fetishism which turns relations between men into relations between things as the source of ideology is rejected. Politically, Callinicos says that if fetishism is allowed then this suggests that "capitalism can reproduce itself indefinitely". Both of these grounds are wrong. By avoiding Marx's reified individual Callinicos apparently avoids "pessimism". In its place he puts a groundless, fatalistic "optimism" based on an idealist notion of spontaneous class consciousness that must lead to workers remaining trapped by fetishised exchange relations (1985:131). Nor do I think that Eagleton's warnings against "fetishism" are valid (1986:75). For an excellent discussion of the importance of Marx's method and the theory of commodity fetishism in Marxism, see Rubin, 1973. For its application to the theory of the party see Lukacs, 1970 and 1971.

[67](#) Briefly, the failure of materialist dialectics in Western Marxism results from the split between objective and subjective reality that can be united only in the programme of the revolutionary party. Callinicos cannot transcend this split because his stance is one of objective idealism in which the working class (rather than humanity) acts spontaneously, unmediated by the revolutionary unity of theory and practice in the party which is necessary to penetrate fetishised reality. On the other hand, Derrida is attempting to revise Marxism as a left-Hegelian subjective idealism. In both cases the self-activity of the individual is dehistoricised either by abstracting from social relations in Derrida's case, or by abstracting from the alienated bourgeois subject in Callinicos' case.

[68](#) 1986:87.

[69](#) 1996:87, 1995.

[70](#) Laclau, 1995; Critchley, 1995.

[71](#) 1995:95.

[72](#) 1999:9 There are strong echoes here of Jameson's endorsement of "weak messianism".

[73](#) 1980:404, 411.

[74](#) 1996:40-41 n.7.

[75](#) See Callinicos' discussion in 1987: ch. 5.

[76](#) See Marx on Stirner: "The unity of sentimentality and bragging is rebellion" (Marx and Engels, 1976:318) and "By rebellion we make a leap into the new, egotistical world" (ibid: 399). Compare Benjamin who sought to eliminate the "autonomous individual" of bourgeois culture and replace him/her with the critical intellectual who used dialectical materialism to destroy capitalism by means of critique which could explode the contradiction in the commodity at its point of highest tension -- the dialectical image (Pensky, 1993; Lowy, 1996; Wohlfarth, 1996).

[77](#) 1999:248-9.

[78](#) 1999:253-4.

[79](#) "For Saint Sancho however, self-determination does not even consist in will, but in indifference to any kind of determinateness...if Saint Sancho saves himself from determination by his leap into absence of determination . . . then the practical, moral content of the whole trick . . . is merely an apology for the vocation forced on every individual in the world as it has existed so far. If, for example, the workers assert in their communist propaganda that the vocation, designation, task of every person is to achieve all-round development of all his abilities, including . . . the ability to think, Saint Sancho sees in this only the vocation to something alien, the assertion of the "holy". He seeks to free them from this by defending the individual who had been crippled by the division of labour at the expense of his abilities and relegated to a one-sided vocation against his own need to become different. . . . The all-rounded realisation of the individual will only cease to be conceived as an ideal, a vocation, etc., when the impact of the world which stimulates the real development of the abilities of the individual is under the control of the individuals themselves, as the communists desire" (Marx and Engels, 1976:308-309 also 463). I would argue that this projected communist individual is the unity of theory and practice, which theoretically is foreshadowed in the party cadre of the Communist Party (Bolshevik).

[80](#) Benjamin's "marxism" had an idealist residue. This could be seen to result from his efforts to escape the crude (vulgar marxist) determinism of Stalinism, and his own personal isolation and intellectual standpoint. On Adorno's and Brecht's views on Benjamin see Broderson, 1996: 233-239.

[81](#) Pensky, 1993:211-239.

[82](#) Benjamin's rejection of the "party" was probably more the effect of his isolation from the working class, than a cause of it. There is obviously no direct relationship between actual historic party membership and the incipient 'communist' individual Marx projects in the *Germany Ideology*. First, after 1924 the actually existing party was Stalinist and repressed or even murdered its dissidents. This meant that the "Left opposition" had few mass roots that could have sustained a "collective" proletarian culture. It would be interesting to compare the long-term legacy of Benjamin with his younger brother Georg who joined the party in 1923 and died in a concentration camp in 1942 (Broderson, 1996: 208).

[83](#) See Broderson (1996:261) for an account that shows that Benjamin was but one of countless victims of fascism. His decision to kill himself in Port Bou on the French/Spanish border rather than be returned to Vichy France and to a concentration camp, followed frantic but futile phone calls to the US Consulate in Barcelona, and tragically occurred during a short period of one day when the Spanish authorities refused entry.

[84](#) 1996:70-72.

[85](#) Thomas, 1980:142.

[86](#) Specifically Benjamin's uncompromising attitude towards the "independence" of cultural history which for him is reduced to the history of class struggle! What about some Benjamin studies in place of "cultural studies"? (See Wohlfarth 1996.)

[87](#) Following Marx, Lenin, Lukacs and Trotsky, my view of materialist dialectics is that it unites objective and subjective reality in the unity of theory and practice of communists. Since Lenin this formulation has been expressed as the unity of theory and practice in the organisation and programme of a democratic centralist party. Intellectual critiques of Derrida's deconstruction do not unite theory with practice unless they are translated into a revolutionary programme and put into effect by a revolutionary party as the "proletarian scientist". Specifically, Derrida's politics would favour an individual contract between a worker and a boss. Since all work is "here/now" this contract should be very flexible. From a materialist dialectical standpoint, the revolutionary party would attempt to sign up individual workers to collective contracts that are enforceable by collective action such as the closed shop. In the process workers would be educated by the experience of winning more favourable conditions, exposing the "performativity" of the isolated worker as one determined by exploitative social relations rather than the "affirmation of the other".

[88](#) 1999:231.

[89](#) This breaking of the unity is an attempt by the petty bourgeois intelligentsia to "incorporate" the "serviceable" parts of Marxism and "purify" the rest. Thus separating the exchange moment reduces exploitation to unequal exchange the province of the trade union bureaucracy; freezing the distributional moment reduces exploitation to power relations and the maldistribution of wealth which can be reformed by parliament. . . . Freezing the consumption moment, reduces the notion of exploitation to individual errors of choice and hence to caveat emptor.

[90](#) Derrida, 1999:237.

[91](#) Marx and Engels, 1976:310.

[92](#) Cf Ebert, 1996.

[93](#) 1994:40.

[94](#) Ibid:52.

[95](#) Ibid:81.

[96](#) Ibid:31-32.

[97](#) Just as in the 1890's Max Weber borrowed from Marx in order to suborn him (Clarke, 1982) so in the 1990's Derrida repays his debt to Marx by "buying him cheap and selling him dear". Marx rejects the analysis of capitalism based on exchange-relations where profits "apparently" derive from "buying cheap and selling dear". Similarly, I reject Derrida's re-appropriation of Marx as similarly superficial because he "profits" from the "appearance" that Marx stands for distributional social justice rather than the revolutionary "essence" which is the socialisation of the means of production to produce use-values to meet needs.

[98](#) Ibid: 59; 68. Rorty picks up on this when he says that Derrida "betrays his own project" by offering a view which is not totally devoid of "all dialectics, all theology, all teleology, all ontology" (1991:92-91). Rorty obviously sees Derrida as genuinely keeping alive some of the misconceived totalising spirits of Marx. He accuses Derrida of offering a "new metavocabulary which claims superior status" (1991:94).

[99](#) 1994:88-89.

[100](#) 1994:68.

[101](#) See Lukacs, 1980. Specifically on post-1945 irrationalism (765-853).

[102](#) 1994:87-90.

[103](#) Ibid 14, 14, 30. See also more recent statements along the same lines in Derrida 1997 and 1998.

[104](#) Stirner's ego is an idealist essence because it abstracts from social relations and inserts a concept of the free ego. The "association of egos" is therefore meaningless. As Marx says of Stirner's rebellion: "The difference between revolution and Stirner's rebellion is not, as Stirner thinks, that the one is a political and social act while the other is an egoistical act, but that the former is an act while the latter is no act at all. The whole senselessness of the antithesis that Stirner puts forward is evident at once from the fact that he speaks of "the Revolution" as a juridical person, which has to fight against "what exists", another juridical person" (ibid: 400).

[105](#) Marx continues: "They entered into intercourse with one another as what they were, they proceeded "from themselves", as they were, irrespective of their "outlook on life". This "outlook on life" -- even the warped one of the philosophers -- could, of course, only

be determined by their actual life. Hence it certainly follows that the development of an individual is determined by the development of all the others with whom [s]he is directly or indirectly associated, and that the different generations of individuals entering into relation with one another are connected with one another, that the physical existence of the later generations is determined by that of their predecessors, and that these later generations inherit the productive forces and forms of intercourse [productive relations] accumulated by their predecessors, their own mutual relations being determined thereby. In short, it is clear that development takes place and that the history of a single individual cannot possibly be separated from the history of preceding or contemporary individuals, but is determined by this history" (1976:463).

[106](#) 1994: 85-86.

[107](#) Ahmad, 1994:103.

[108](#) 1999:241-2.

[109](#) See Hamacher's (1999) sympathetic interpretation of this point. It is not too difficult to see that Derrida's notion of performativity is the (post) modern version of the existential, irrational subject. See Lukacs on the "Ash Wednesday of Parasitical Subjectivism" (1980: 489 passim).

[110](#) See Soros, 1998: 6-27, and Giddens, 1995.

[111](#) Crisis is understood here following Mattick, 1981.

[112](#) Pilling, 1986.

[113](#) Giddens, 1995:247.

[114](#) Marx and Engels, 1962: 43-45.

[115](#) Marx, 1973:99.

[116](#) Hayek, 1935.

[117](#) Despite his disclaimers and attempts to purge filiation, fraternity, paternity etc of the authority of the pre-existing everything (history), it seems to me that the logic of Derrida's whole method is that of the priest/demagogue/saviour who speaks to the masses of the religion of pure egoism as personal salvation -- his message? "faith, hope, charity". . .

[118](#) On this point see Deb Kelsh (1998).

[119](#) Trotsky, 1971:62.

[120](#) Derrida, 1994:7

[121](#) Cf. Callinicos' view that Marx confuses technical and social relations in *The German Ideology* (1985:131).

[122](#) Here I follow Lukacs' brilliant exposition of the Communist (i.e. Bolshevik) Party as the "conscious" vanguard of the proletariat. I cite only one passage: "The pre-eminently practical nature of the Communist Party, the fact that it is a fighting party presupposes its possession of a correct theory, for otherwise the consequences of a false theory would soon destroy it. Moreover, it is a form of organisation that produces and reproduces correct theoretical insights by consciously ensuring that the organisation has built into it ways of adapting with increase sensitivity to the effects of a theoretical posture. Thus the ability to act, the faculty of self-criticism, of self-correction and of theoretical development all co-exist in a state of constant interaction. The Communist Party does not function as a stand-in for the proletariat even in theory. If the class consciousness of the proletariat viewed as a function of the thought and action of the class as a whole is something organic and in a state of constant flux, then this must be reflected in the organised form of that class consciousness, namely in the Communist Party. . . . Thus in the theory of the party the process, the dialectic of class consciousness becomes a dialectic that is consciously deployed" (1971:327-8).

[123](#) E.g. Lukacs, 1970, 1971; Lenin, 1976; Trotsky, 1975.

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