

## *One*

# Proto-Theories of the New Class: Hegel, Saint-Simon, and Marx

In the introduction, we called Bakunin the first New Class theorist. This is only correct if we understand New Class theories as critical assessments of Marxist forecast concerning the class character of postcapitalism. From Bakunin to Gouldner the social analysts whom we call New Class theorists all agreed with Marx that a postcapitalist future was inevitable, though they did not think that this society would be either classless or a dictatorship of the proletariat. They all predicted the rise of a new dominant class, which—if one used a broad enough definition of intellectuals—was likely to be composed of some fraction of intellectuals or the intelligentsia as a whole. Given this definition of New Class theories, Bakunin is indeed the first in line.

There are, however, earlier theories that foreshadow this position. The idea that the monopoly of knowledge of one sort or another may be—or, if it is not, should be—one or even the main source of power and privilege has been around since the dawn of philosophy. Plato’s “philosopher king” may have been the first fully fledged formulation of the idea of “rule by reason.”

In this chapter, we present three proto-theories of the New Class. All the proto-theories reviewed here share the usually normative character of earlier philosophies about the desirability and superiority of the rule of reason over other forms of social domination.

These proto-theories are already motivated by disenchantment with the emerging civil, or capitalist, society; thus, they are historically contextualized theories that formulate the dominant themes of the subsequent major waves of New Class theories. We still call them *proto-theories*, however, since they precede the idea of a classless post-capitalist future. They pave the way to the mature Marxist vision of socialism, and at the same time they identify those crucial contradictions of the Marxist analysis of capitalism and project for socialism that New Class theories will critically reflect.

The three proto-theories are: Hegel's theory of the civil servants as the "universal class"; Saint-Simon's yearning for a society ruled by scientists; and, finally, the crucial role the young Marx in his "Hegelian epoch" attributed to the critical intelligentsia, to the theorists of the socialist revolution.

The aging Hegel, an earlier enthusiast of the French Revolution, became bitterly disappointed with what he saw as the hopeless particularism of class egoism in civil society. In search of a universal viewpoint, he found the ideal state, the embodiment of the Hegelian system. This universal viewpoint was supposed to be carried out by the enlightened civil servants who could be seen as the only universal class standing above the particularistic classes of civil society.

Saint-Simon saw with anguish the anarchy that was unleashed by the forces of the market, and he saw in science and in the scientists the promise of a new, rational order.

The young Marx is inspired by both of these traditions. In his writings between 1843 and late 1844 he is searching for an agent that can indeed represent the universal viewpoint. He is also committed to Enlightenment rationalism and sees markets as a source of anarchy. Marx, however, transcends both the Hegelian and the Saint-Simonian perspectives. He is attracted early by the critique of Hegel advanced by the young Hegelians; like other young Hegelians, he objects to what he believes is Hegel's inclination to reify the state. The task for Marx, too, is to turn the Hegelian critical method against the Hegelian system and the state itself. In this process, the "critical critics," the critical intelligentsia, play a crucial role. However Marx—under the influence of anarchists, especially Proudhon—becomes irritated with the futility of criticism for criticism's sake. Thus, as early as the spring of 1844, he identifies the proletariat and not the critical intelligentsia as the universal agent of history; however, while the

proletariat forms the “heart” of the revolution, its “head” remains the critical intelligentsia.

In other words, the three proto-theories foreshadow three New Class actors that will occupy the center stage of various later New Class theories: the bureaucracy, the technocracy, and the critical intelligentsia.

## The Hegelian Concept of the Universal Class of Civil Servants

Hegel developed his theory of the “universal class of civil servants” in his *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 1942). First published in 1821, this book is the work of the aging Hegel. During the last years of his life, Hegel was turning politically more conservative and he was losing his earlier enthusiasm for the ideals of the French Revolution. In developing the philosophy of the state, this conservative turn of political beliefs played an important role. Hegel made a crucial distinction in this book between the political state and civil society. This distinction expressed his changing political views and at the same time opened up important new theoretical perspectives.

Eighteenth-century French social philosophers and the classical British political theorists regarded civil society as the arena of civil liberties, the approximation of the democratic ideal of the state. As Hegel became disillusioned with the bourgeois revolution he began to look at bourgeois or civil society as an arena of rather disgraceful particularistic struggles that would keep society in turmoil unless they could be regulated by the state, expressing the spirit of the universal order. While civil society expresses particularism, the state is the embodiment of universalism: “The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea. It is ethical mind qua the substantial will manifest and revealed to itself. . . . The state is absolutely rational inasmuch as it is the actuality of the substantial will which possesses in the particular self-consciousness of its universality. This substantial unity is an absolute unmoved end in itself. . . . This final end has supreme right against the individual. . . . If the state is confused with civil society, and if its specific end is laid down as the security and protection of property and personal freedom, then the interest of the individual as such becomes the ultimate end of their association” (Hegel 1942, 155–56).

This is a critique of bourgeois democracy, and in a sense an opening to radical political theory. As Marx noted in his “Contribution

to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law": "It shows Hegel's profundity that he sees the separation of civil from political society as a contradiction. He is wrong, however, to be content with the appearance of this resolution and to pretend it is the substance, whereas the 'so-called theories' he despises demand the 'separation' of the civil from the political estates . . . and rightly so. . . . The representative constitution is a great advance, since it is the frank, undistorted, consistent expression of the modern condition of the state. It is an unconcealed contradiction" (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:75).

Hegel after all did not move in the direction of a radical political theory; he thought he could resolve the contradiction, noted by Marx in the quoted passage, between the particularism of civil society and the apparent universalism of the political state by state institutions that are above civil society. Here he clearly had the Prussian state as a model in mind. At this point, the Hegelian radical left-wing critique of "bourgeois democracy" turned into a romantic, conservative one.

Despite its romantic, conservative ideological and political implications, the Hegelian theory of the state and civil society was a major advancement, when compared with French social philosophy or English classical political theory, toward the foundation of a sociological conceptualization of the state. While earlier views of civil society were operating with the concept of individual will and with the idea of contract based on an arbitrary will, for Hegel the relationship between state and civil society appeared as a problem of classes. "The merit of Rousseau's contribution to the search for this concept is that, by adducing the will as the principle of the state, he is adducing a principle which has thought both for its form and its content. . . . Unfortunately, however . . . he takes the will only in a determinate form as the individual will, and he regards the universal will not as the absolutely rational element in the will, but only as a 'general' will which proceeds out of the individual will as out of a conscious will. The result is that he reduces the union of individuals in the state to a contract and therefore to something based on their arbitrary wills" (Hegel 1942, 156–57). According to Hegel, the universalism expressed by the state was *sui generis*; it was irreducible to the individual will; it could be grasped only at the level of classes.

Hegel does not reduce the essence of the state to the contract between individuals; he thinks that the universality of the state is carried by one class, the "class of civil servants," that he calls the "universal

class" (Hegel 1942, 131–34 and 197–200, paragraphs 202–208 and 303–307). The other two classes in society cannot express the universal will. The “substantial” or “agricultural” class can express only an implicit universality, since it is locked into immediacy, especially, the immediacy of family life. In contrast, the “business” or “industrial” class already shows reflectivity, but this is only an advance from implicit universality to explicit particularity. The emergence of this second class also signifies the movement from life based on family to life based on civil society. The political state and the universal class of civil servants is the synthesis of all earlier developments. (See the note of T. M. Knox to paragraph 202 in Hegel 1942, 356). The explicit particularism of the business class is now superseded by this explicit universalism of the “universal civil servant class”; social life based on family or on civil society is superseded by life based on the state. “The universal class (the class of civil servants) has for its task the universal interest of the community. It must, therefore, be relieved from direct labor to supply its needs, either by having private means or by receiving an allowance from the state which claims its industry in its work for the universal” (Hegel 1942, 132, paragraph 205).

### Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte on Science

Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte share with Hegel a disenchantment with the French Revolution. They, like Hegel, were particularly concerned with the deleterious societal effects of individuals pursuing particularistic goals, which they saw as a recipe for anarchy. All three searched for ways to bring order to their societies.

In Saint-Simon’s view, the French Revolution induced “an upheaval in which all the existing relations between the members of a nation become precarious, and anarchy, the greatest of all scourges, rages unchecked, until the misery in which it plunges the nation afflicted by it arouses a desire for the restoration of order even in the most ignorant of its members” (Saint-Simon [1803] 1952, 5).

Neither Hegel nor Saint-Simon nor Comte, however, advocated a romantic or reactionary response to the emergence of bourgeois society. Saint-Simon, in spite of his aristocratic origins, did not champion reinstating the old order. Like Hegel, he did not want to return to feudalism, but rather to move past France’s anarchic society toward a new organic social order.

Hegel’s solution relied on enlightened civil service bureaucrats

staffing the state. In contrast, Saint-Simon and Comte inherited an anti-statist bias from the French intellectual tradition. They were also greatly influenced by the “scientific” bias of French social thought. Rather than identify the state as the instrument of order and freedom, they viewed science as the instrument of human emancipation. Thus, Saint-Simon and Comte drew on themes deeply rooted in eighteenth and nineteenth century French philosophy, which replaced religion with science as the basis for social thought and the salvation of humanity.

Saint-Simon, writing during the first years of the nineteenth century, offered a critique of the previous century and a program for the future, in works like *Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva* (1803) and *Essays on the Science of Man* (1813). The eighteenth century was dominated by critical thought and social disorganization, he argued, and the task of the nineteenth century was to move to positive thinking and create a new social order. In this process, the development of positive sciences, especially the positive science of “man,” or society, was crucial: “Already astronomy, physics and chemistry have been reorganized on this positive basis: these sciences are nowadays an essential part, the very foundation of education. It follows necessarily that physiology, of which the science of man is a part, will be brought under the same method as the other physical sciences, and that it will be introduced into education when it has been made *positive*” (Saint-Simon [1813] 1952, 21; Ansart 1970, 10–11).

Saint-Simon hoped that the evolution of positive social science would fill the vacuum created by the decay of traditional religious beliefs and institutions. “Having rendered . . . important services, the Christian religion . . . had fulfilled its function and completed the useful part of its career: it had attained old age. This institution . . . had become a burden on society” (Saint-Simon [1813] 1952, 23). Elsewhere, in his *Introduction to Scientific Studies of Nineteenth Century*, he further elaborates this point: “Deism is a belief which lags behind the present stage of enlightenment. . . . [T]he human mind owes the great progress which it has made in the mathematical and physical sciences . . . to the weakening of belief in God” (Saint-Simon [1813] 1952, 19).

The “science of man,” though, served a dual purpose for Saint-Simon: beyond the accumulation of knowledge, necessary for the rational administration of society, it would also help stabilize the new

social system, necessary since order had been destroyed in the previous century. This new science therefore would have to function as a secular religion; scientists would have to act like modern priests: “I have shown that the idea of God should not be used in the physical sciences, but . . . it is the best means that has been discovered of managing the fundamental political relations. . . . The scientific opinions . . . should be clothed in forms which make them sacred, in order that they can be taught to the children of all classes and the illiterate, whatever their age” (Saint-Simon [1813] 1952, 20).

Saint-Simon saw this emergent social order as an industrial society in which inequalities—necessary or even desirable—would be based on knowledge, merit, competence, on the one hand, and property on the other (Ansart 1970, 174). While Saint-Simon was in no way opposed to private property, he saw problems if it was not under the tutelage of competence. Property ownership per se, he argued, did not guarantee that proprietors would be committed to the tasks of production; they indeed might even abandon this task and “live in the style of nobles” (Saint-Simon [1819] 1952, 73; Ansart 1970, 213). Thus, not proprietors but scientists and artists were more important for the rational and effective organization of the society and the economy.

According to Pierre Ansart, Saint-Simon in *Catechisme des industriels* (Saint-Simon 1824) “gives a privileged role to industrial leaders and he sees them as being responsible for the organization of future society. In Saint-Simon’s view the superiority of industrialists is not based on their wealth, since he rejects idle proprietors as one of those forces hostile towards industry, but it is based on their competence” (Ansart 1970, 165). In Saint-Simon’s own words, “[T]he scientists, artists and industrialists, and the heads of industrial concerns are the men who possess the most eminent, varied and most positively useful ability, for the guidance of men’s minds at the present time. . . . [T]he work of the scientists, artists, and industrialists is that which, in discovery and application, contributes most to national prosperity” (Saint-Simon [1825] 1952, 78).

Auguste Comte, who was Saint-Simon’s secretary from 1818 to 1822, left the sectarian excesses of some of Saint-Simon’s followers for the academy. He stayed faithful to Saint-Simon’s philosophy, however, extending Saint-Simon’s early formulation of positivism. For Comte, as for Saint-Simon, positivism meant the objective study of a

phenomenon to find a “positive” solution based on logic as opposed to superstition or some other non-rational approach. Comte also used the word “positivism” to attack French enlightenment figures, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, for “negative thinking” that helped destroy the old order through criticism. Because these figures did not advance positive solutions to the problems they highlighted, the disintegration of the old order brought chaos. Comte also extended Saint-Simon’s solution to disorder. While Saint-Simon identified agents that would exercise essentially technocratic solutions to social problems, Comte merged this idea with his desire for a positive study of society. Whereas Saint-Simon had essentially a technocratic solution to the problems of disorder, Comte saw the need for social engineering, which would be based on “sociologie,” his name for the scientific study of society.

While Marx acknowledged his inspiration from German Idealism, there are also obvious links between Marx and Saint-Simon and Comte. In fact, Marx’s socialism is in many respects a combination of Hegel’s statism with Saint-Simon and Comte’s scientific solution. Marx shares with the French the criticism of capitalism as anarchy, as well as a belief that a solution to this problem can be found only if utopian socialism is replaced by a socialism rooted in scientific rational discourse (although this reliance on science was more pronounced in Engels’ writings than in Marx’s own work). For Marx, as for Saint-Simon and Comte, scientific information used by planners would overcome the anarchy of the market. Marx criticized utopian socialists because they critiqued capitalism on ethical grounds, and not on a scientific understanding of society leading to an analysis of how it could realistically be transformed. This was similar to Marx’s critique of the anarchists for their overemphasis on the role of spontaneous activity of the workers in social transformation and their rejection of reliance on the state to organize the economy.

Marx, like Saint-Simon and Comte but unlike the anarchists, assigned a large role to the social theorist in social transformation. The anarchists believed revolutionary consciousness would be formed spontaneously by what Marx termed the lumpen proletariat without any help from intellectuals. However, unlike Comte’s and Saint-Simon’s, Marx’s view of the role of intellectuals is informed by his bottom-up approach to history. Saint-Simon and Comte view society from above, and want to impose order through a scientific elite. In

contrast, Marx sees the structural basis of the new society in the workers. To the extent that intellectuals, or “bourgeois ideologists, who have raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole,” as he refers to them in the *Communist Manifesto* (Tucker 1978, 481), understand the historic mission of the workers, based on a scientific understanding of capitalism, they can react back upon history by providing leadership and a revolutionary consciousness for the proletariat. However, not just any consciousness can be inscribed on the proletariat by revolutionary theorists. Rather, the theory must be ad hominem to the worker. It must describe a reality that the worker experiences but does not have the concepts or theories to make sense of.

### The Proletariat as a Universal Class

In the development of the Marxist theory of classes, the critique of the Hegelian theory of the state and “universal class” played a decisive role. During 1843 and 1844, in those crucial years during which Marx and Engels prepared their epistemological break with Hegel, they subjected the views of Hegel and the Young Hegelians to systematic critique. The first major piece was the “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law,” a work that Marx left incomplete in the summer of 1843. This book attempted to demystify the idea of the “universalism of the state.” The “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law. Introduction” (in Marx and Engels 1975, vol. 3) written some six months after the “Critique” itself, is a major breakthrough.

While, in his critique of Hegel, Marx simply rejected the Hegelian notion of the civil servants as the universal class, in this introduction for the first time he identified the new universal agent as the proletariat. In 1844 Marx and Engels joined forces and, in “The Holy Family” (Marx and Engels 1975, vol. 4), concentrated their attack on the young Hegelians. In objecting to the role that some young Hegelian philosophers attributed to the “critical critics” (critical intellectuals), they substantially expanded their theory of the “universal class of the proletariat.” Lukács found these works the key to the understanding of the Marxist concept of class (Georg Lukács 1971, particularly section 3, 149–209; see also material about Lukács’s application of the concept of the “proletarian universal class” in I. Mészáros 1971, 91–94). Lenin also regarded the “Contribution to the critique of

Hegel's philosophy of law. Introduction," among other works written in this epoch, as a crucial link in the development of the theory of the proletarian revolution (Lenin 1960, 21-47).

### *The Critique of the Universalism of the State*

In the "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law"—if we may use Gouldner's terminology (Gouldner 1979, 7)—Marx documents how "badly flawed" is the universalism of the state in general and the state bureaucracy in particular. Marx's critique of Hegel is, in fact, as much anti-feudal as anticapitalist. The argument Marx develops in this essay has two components.

First, Marx shows the pseudo-universalism of the kind of political rule represented by the estates in the Prussian State, and in this sense he offers an anti-feudal critique of the early and mid-nineteenth century German political system. This analysis still belongs to the bourgeois-liberal epoch of Marx. His early journalism in the *Deutsche Jahrbucher* and in the *Rheinische Zeitung* was still very much a rejection of prebourgeois, feudalistic, and authoritarian German political machinery. The main concerns of the young journalist Marx were civil liberties, universal suffrage, and other sorts of what he would later come to call "bourgeois rights." In other words, in unmasking the particularism hidden behind the pretended universalism of the political system of the German State, and especially of Prussia, Marx offered a critique of the political system from the point of view of civil society. The political program to gain "bourgeois citizenship rights" was very much on Marx's agenda; he defended bourgeois democratic institutions and found the demand for the separation of civil society from the political state justified. Marx also thought that the replacement of the monarchy with a representative constitution would be an advance (Marx and Engels 1975, 3: 75 and see also footnote 3:77).

Already, in this work, however, Marx began to move significantly beyond such a "bourgeois liberal critique." He desired the separation of civil society and the political state because it would reveal the unconcealed contradictions in the modern state (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:75). He believed that, in the final analysis, in spite of pretensions to universalism, the state is a universalized expression only of the particularistic interests of the dominant class of the civil society: "The bureaucracy must therefore protect the imaginary generality of the

particular interest, the spirit of the corporations, in order to protect the imaginary particularity of the general interest—its own spirit” (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:46). Marx found the Hegelian scenario not only false, but also dangerous. A reformed Prussian state, with an enlightened civil service bureaucracy, conceals rather than alters the character of the modern state. The removal of the feudal facade and the establishment of bourgeois democratic institutions would only make it more obvious that bourgeois political emancipation in no way resolves the fundamental problems of human emancipation.

That Marx defended the bourgeois policy of the separation of the political state and civil society was not because he suspected or despised the resulting domination by the particularistic bourgeois interests less than Hegel did. Marx shared with Hegel a belief in the need for a universal viewpoint, for universal emancipation, but Marx thought that Hegel was searching for the agent of such emancipation in the wrong place.

### *The Problem of Human or Universal Emancipation*

The question of universal emancipation, the identification of the agent who represents the universal interest of humankind, was permanently on Marx’s mind during these months. In his essay “On the Jewish Question,” written immediately after he ceased work on the unfinished manuscript of the “Critique,” Marx continued the search for his solution (Marx and Engels 1975, vol. 3).

While, in the “Critique,” Marx established the need for bourgeois political emancipation that would “unconceal,” but not resolve, the contradictions of civil society, in “On the Jewish Question” he tried to be more specific and offer a solution to these contradictions. This essay is a critique of Bruno Bauer, a Young Hegelian, who argued that the Jewish question could be solved by a radical political emancipation of the Jews. Marx agreed that such a political emancipation would be necessary. However, as in the “Critique,” he reconfirmed his belief that it would not be sufficient for real emancipation: “Political emancipation is . . . a big step forward. True it is not the final form of human emancipation in general, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the hitherto existing world order.” (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:155). All that political emancipation can achieve is the “reduction of man . . . to a member of civil society” (3:168).

It was human emancipation in general that was really needed, a form of emancipation that would transcend civil society, the society of egoistic, independent individuals. In terms of the Jewish question, this meant that it was not sufficient to make the state genuinely universal, as Bauer wished. Bauer recommended a state that regarded religion as the private affair of individuals; Marx believed this insufficient. The final emancipation of the Jews would come only if society was also emancipated from Judaism and all other religion (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:174). While, in the “Critique,” Marx only demystified the imaginary universalism of the state, in “On the Jewish Question” he states the need for a universal emancipation, which cannot be carried out by the state or by state bureaucracies. In neither of these works, however, could he explain how such a universal emancipation was possible and which social force could carry it out.

After Marx finished “On the Jewish Question,” he returned to his work on the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of law. He wrote an “Introduction” incorporating the new discoveries of “On the Jewish Question” into this critique of the Hegelian theory of the state. Marx restated that a political emancipation—in a country like Germany, which had only the illusions of a constitutional state—was necessary, but it would not be sufficient to achieve general human emancipation. In the “Introduction,” Marx moved one step beyond this position: he identified the force that could carry out the task of such a universal emancipation. This was “the class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not of civil society” (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:186). This class—the proletariat—has a “universal character by its universal suffering” (3:186). Marx moved therefore beyond the unmasking of the “flawed universal character” of the class of civil servants; he identified his own universal class. In his view, it was a Hegelian illusion that a civil servant class could ever impose the universal will on the bourgeoisie and resolve the contradiction between the particularism of civil society and the universalism assumedly expressed by the state. No class of civil society, no class of state bureaucrats, could emancipate the whole of society. The only solution is the transcendence of civil society, of all class particularism, of the separation of state and civil society. The only class that has the interest, and may have the will as well, to transcend civil society, is the class that can only lose “its chains”; that is, of course, the working class. In the “Poverty of Philosophy,” this view was formulated powerfully: “The

condition of the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of every class, just as the condition for the liberation of the Third Estate, of the bourgeois order, was the abolition of all estates and all orders”(vol. 5).

The same theme is formulated in a more philosophical language in the “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844”: “[T]he emancipation of society from private property . . . is expressed in the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not that their emancipation alone is at stake, but because the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation” (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:280). In the terminology of the “Manuscripts,” the working class will carry out this universal emancipation, since the historical process of alienation has produced its most extreme form in the alienation of wage laborers. The total negation of wage labor will be universal emancipation.

Here we reach the most controversial point in the Marxist theory of the universal class. If in their particularistic existence the wage laborers are indeed found in the most extreme form of alienation, how can they transcend their alienated condition? How can we expect the workers in their universal suffering, alienation, and immiseration to develop the consciousness adequate to their universal historic task?

### *Proletariat and Philosophers: Which Is the Universal Class?*

Marx confronted this question already in the “Contribution to the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of law. Introduction.” For the proletariat to fulfill its mission of universal emancipation, it has to rise from its present conditions “to the rank of a principle of society” (Marx and Engels 1975, 3:187). This cannot happen without philosophy. The universal emancipation will be achieved when philosophy and the proletariat meet: “[P]hilosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat.” And again: “The head of this emancipation is philosophy, its heart is the proletariat” (3:187).

This explanation of the transformation of the proletariat from its totally alienated condition into the complete negation of this alienation was borrowed from Hegel. “Already in Hegel the Absolute Spirit of history has its material in the Mass and finds its appropriate expression only in philosophy.” (Marx and Engels 1975, 4:85). But Marx and Engels begin to see the difficulties of this explanation. For Hegel it was the Absolute Spirit that made history, and philosophy appeared

on the scene only *post festum*. This view was unacceptable for Marx and Engels because of its idealism. They insisted that history cannot be made in “speculative imagination,” but only by practical activity (4:86) that is guided by “actual philosophical individuals.” In order to comprehend the formation of the “proletarian universal class” it was not sufficient to explore the relation between “idea” and “mass”; the relation between the philosopher and the worker was the one that required reflection. This question was discussed rather systematically in the critique of Bruno Bauer and of other Young Hegelians.

Bruno Bauer did not leave Marx’s attack on him in “On the Jewish Question” without reply, but went on the counterattack (Marx and Engels 1975, 4:106–18). In Bauer’s view, Marx was uncritical, since he expected the universal emancipation from an inert and passive mass; Bauer attempted to offer an alternative by revising Hegel. In Bauer’s conception, the place of Absolute Spirit was taken by Criticism. Criticism furthermore was not incarnated in a mass, but in a handful of Critics. The Critics, although they reflected on history only in the imagination, still executed history, while the Mass remained the passive, material element of history (4:86).

Bauer in a sense here foreshadows the coming debate about the New Class. He doubted that the proletariat could develop the necessary consciousness to perform its function as the universal class. Bauer looked at the “critical critics” (in our contemporary terminology we may call them intelligentsia or humanistic intellectuals) as the real agents of universal emancipation, or the real universal class.

In response to Bauer, Marx and Engels elaborated their most candid and fullest account of the relations between the proletariat and the philosophers/ideologues, in *The Holy Family*. This book is the summary of their criticism of the Young Hegelian philosophy and particularly of the Bauer brothers. Despite the vitriolic language used in the book, Marx and Engels take Bauer’s disrespect for the “mass” seriously. They did not want to assume that the working class will develop automatically an emancipatory consciousness, but neither did they want to degrade the workers to the role of the passive mass. They tried to strike a balance between the naive “ouvrierism” of Proudhon (whom they still admired for his dedication to the French proletariat) and the elitism of the Young Hegelians. They started their criticism of Bauer by ridiculing the idea that the act of transforming society can be “reduced to the cerebral activity of Critical Criticism” (Marx and

Engels 1975, 4:86). Against Bruno Bauer and other Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels sided with the French socialists, and particularly with Proudhon. They emphatically claimed, “Critical Criticism creates nothing, the worker creates everything” (4:20).

The method of historical materialism had not yet been fully developed, but Marx and Engels were materialist enough at that time to doubt that “critical critics,” who “create nothing,” could carry out the task of universal emancipation. The two began to write *The Holy Family* in September 1844, immediately after Marx ceased working on the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. During the summer of 1844, while working on the manuscripts, Marx made significant progress toward a materialist reinterpretation of the problem of alienation/emancipation. He radically reinterpreted Hegel, who understood alienation in terms of the development of the “Spirit” as a stage in the evolution of self-consciousness. In the *Manuscripts*, Marx rooted the problem of alienation in the process of commodity exchange. The proletariat for him is the best suited to carry out the task of universal emancipation since it suffers the most from the commodification of economic and social relationships. These materialistic arguments were not repeated in *The Holy Family*.

It is impossible, from the text of *The Holy Family* alone, to see how far Marxist theory had already moved away from Hegel. Lukács’s analysis of class consciousness (in his *History and Class Consciousness*) is based mainly on *The Holy Family*, and therefore he overemphasized the Hegelian bias in the Marxian theory of the “proletarian universal class.” We know from the 1967 introduction to *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács 1967) how surprised Lukács was when, about a decade later, while in Moscow during his years in Soviet exile, he had a chance to read the still unpublished *Manuscripts* and to gain new insights about the materialist foundation of the concept of the “proletarian universal class.” Lukács in his auto-critique subsequently acknowledged that his view of the development of proletarian revolutionary consciousness, the “ascribed consciousness of the proletariat,” had been too “subjectivistic.”

Indeed, if one reads *The Holy Family* after the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, one can better understand why “the proletariat . . . is compelled as a proletariat to abolish itself and thereby its opposite, private property” (Marx and Engels 1975, 4:36). Marx and Engels tried to establish what the objective reasons

are for the proletariat's having a universal character. For them, the proletariat is a universal class irrespectively of its actual consciousness: "It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what in accordance with its being, it will historically be compelled to do" (4:37).

It may be possible to interpret the contribution of the Young Hegelians to Hegelian theory as an attempt to replace the civil servants by the "critical intelligentsia" as the "universal class." When confronted with the initial Hegelian position, Marx argued that the state, staffed by civil servants, could not express genuine universalism. When Marx and Engels confronted the Young Hegelian proposition, they did not really question the universalism of the point of view of critical intellectuals, but rather questioned this group's ability and interest to carry out the tasks of universal emancipation.

While Marx and Engels insisted that the revision of Hegel by the Young Hegelians was inadequate and that their own theory of the "proletarian universal class" was the only valid theory, they did not want to underestimate the role of "critical intellectuals," Marx and Engels did not commit the error Bauer thought they committed; they did not blindly believe in the revolutionary potentials of the "passive Mass." While, as a result of its objective position, the proletariat is the universal class, it can not, Marx and Engels, believed fulfill its historic task by itself. The "socialist writers ascribe this world-historic role to the proletariat" (Marx and Engels 1975, 4:36).

The wage laborers represent an objective potential for universal emancipation, but this potential will not become reality until this objective condition is theoretically reflected upon. The "universal class of proletariat" will carry out the historic task as this theoretical consciousness developed by the "socialist writers," by the "critical intellectuals," is absorbed by the working class.

This position is not an "idealist bias" in Marx and Engels, or a "concession" to the Young Hegelians. On the contrary, it is a rather mature reformulation of the idea that "philosophy finds its material weapon in the proletariat." In this new formulation, thought is replaced by real people, philosophy is replaced by the socialist writers. The Leninist view, according to which the revolutionary consciousness has to be brought into the working class from the outside, by

the revolutionary vanguard, is an authentic interpretation of this Marxian theory of the proletarian universal class.

In their mature works, Marx and Engels concentrated their efforts on explaining the objective conditions of the working class. In most of their scholarly work after 1844–45, they attempted to explain why the proletariat is compelled to perform its historic task. With the exception of the *Grundrisse*, the question of universal emancipation did not receive much attention. But the idea of the proletarian universal class is never abandoned. The problematic reemerges in the work of Lenin on the revolutionary vanguard. The idea that the proletariat will have to carry out a world historic task that is beyond its immediate, particularistic interests, and will be able to do this only because an intellectual vanguard theoretically formulates such a universal task, was, and has remained, an absolutely central component of the Marxist theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Marxist scenario for the emergence of socialism. Attempts to deviate from this, to “subordinate” the historical strategy to the immediate interests of the workers, to devalue the significance of the vanguard, were and will be branded as “revisionism,” fatal deviations from the genuine spirit of Marxism.

Let us briefly summarize: in what way can the young Marx be seen as a proto-theorist of the New Class, and how did his early work along these lines remain consequential for the mature theory of postcapitalism as classless society, or of the dictatorship of the proletariat?

Marx in his early work on the “universal class” offers a synthesis of Hegel and Saint-Simon. Marx adapted from Hegel the idea of universal class, the need for the universal standpoint, but he did not see the civil servants as the proper candidates for this historic role. Early on, under the influence of Proudhon, Marx found the proletariat as the only class with interest in universal emancipation. Marx’s position was formulated in response to the Young Hegelian criticism of his then-recent position—that he blindly believed in the “passive Mass”—and in admiration for Saint-Simon’s celebration of science. Marx qualifies as a proto-theorist of the New Class because he attributed a crucial role to philosophy and science, to critical intellectuals and social scientists, in formulating the historic task that the proletariat will have to eventually carry out.

In the mature work of Marx and Engels, the main task is to show

why objectively the working class will have to carry out the task of revolution. Those who, like Lukács, overemphasize the importance of “ascribed consciousness,” are usually criticized as being Hegelian Marxists. Still, the figures of scientists and critical intellectuals cast their shadow onto the proletariat, as well as upon the whole history of Marxism, including the history of concrete attempts to implement the Marxist scenario of socialism.