

Heidegger, Reification and Formal Indication

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to show how Heidegger recasts the problem of reification in Being and Time, so as to address the methodological procedure of formal indication, outlined in his early writings, in order to carry out a deconstruction of ancient ontology. By revisiting Marx's and Lukács' critique of objectification in social relations, especially the former's critique of alienation, in light of Honneth's critical theory of recognition, it is shown how a Heideggerian-inspired phenomenology of sociality could be reconstructed out of the semantic correlation between reification and formal indication.

Keywords

alienation, formal indication, objectification, ontology, phenomenology, reification, sociality

At the very beginning of his exposition of the preparatory Dasein analysis in *Sein und Zeit*, Martin Heidegger refers to Georg Lukács' "reification of consciousness [*Verdinglichung des Bewusstseins*]" as remaining on the same problematic ontical level of "ancient ontology" that leads us from Platonic and Aristotelian essentialist and substantialist versions of realism towards the Cartesian and Hegelian semantic transformations of the *subjectum*. According to Heidegger:

The Thinghood [*Dinglichkeit*] itself which such reification [*Verdinglichung*] implies must have its ontological origin demonstrated if we are to be in a position to ask what we are to understand *positively* when we think of the unreified *Being* of the subject, the soul, the spirit, the person. (Heidegger 1962, 42)¹

1. I am using the 16th edition of the original text and Macquarrie and Robinson's translation.

Heidegger's radical, originary interpretation of ontology seeks to unmask and overcome an "ancient ontology" that deals with "reified concepts," including that of "reifying consciousness." As we shall see, Heidegger recasts the problem of reification as he asks anew: what, after all, does 'reifying' mean? Beyond Hegelian, Marxist accounts of alienation which objectify relations and otherness, according to Heidegger, it is only in light of the ontical-ontological difference brought about by Dasein as the formal-indicating unveiling of the meaning of Being that we can tackle this question and thus avoid the reification of beings and consciousness. Heidegger's subtle critique of a Marxist "social ontology," even if we don't subscribe to Lucien Goldmann's contention that Heidegger's own treatise might be regarded as a response to Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (Goldmann 1973), may help us make sense of reification in *Being and Time*, within a phenomenology of social life that accounts for the phenomenon of reification, as broadly understood in Kolakowski's definition:

The transformation of all human products and individuals into goods comparable in quantitative terms; the disappearance of qualitative links between people; the gap between public and private life; the loss of personal responsibility and the reduction of human beings to executors of tasks imposed by a rationalized system; the resulting deformation of personality, the impoverishment of human contacts, the loss of solidarity, the absence of generally recognized criteria for artistic work, 'experimentation' as a universal creative principle; the loss of authentic culture owing to the segregation of the different spheres of life, in particular, the domination of the productive processes treated as an element independent of all others. (Kolakowski 1978, 334–335)

In a nutshell, reification comes down to a radical critique of objectification in social relations, understood both in social-ontical terms as *Vergegenständlichung* and in semantic-ontological terms as *Objektivierung*. Since the young Marx's and Lukács' respective criticisms of objectification didn't draw a fundamental distinction that would become Heidegger's most original, insightful contribution to a critique of metaphysics (i.e., the so-called ontological difference), I argue that a veritable phenomenology of sociality may be reconstructed out of such a semantic, ontological correlation between reification and formal indication; thus empirical, ontical features of social life can be kept separate from the intersubjective, ontological co-constitution of Dasein and social lifeworld. Dasein is, of course, to be understood at once in ontical and ontological terms, just like the semantic, ontological correlation of *Weltlichkeit* and *Zeitlichkeit* is evoked in order to account for ontical and ontological concepts of "world" in §14 and "time" of *Sein und Zeit*: "If world-time thus belongs to the tempo-

Page numbers refer to the German edition text, also used in the English edition.

ralizing of temporality, then it can neither be volatilized ‘subjectivistically’ nor ‘reified’ by a vicious ‘objectification’ [*Objektivierung*]” (Heidegger 1962, 420). In its very thrownness, the factual “self” is given the possibility of an authentic self-understanding, unveiling thus the ecstatic nature of existence, “left to the null ground [*an den nichtigen Grund*] of itself [*Überlassenheit*]” (Heidegger 1962, 348). Although I cannot further explore this problem here, it has been my contention that it was thanks to Husserl’s intuitive noematic-noetic differentiation between *Gegenstand* and *Objekt* that Heidegger set out to develop a hermeneutic phenomenology of *Dasein* which addresses some of the most fundamental ontological problems of intersubjectivity and *Lebenswelt* left unanswered in the former (de Oliveira 2009; von Herrmann 2010, 78ff.). To be sure, Heidegger’s apparent dismissal of the sociality of *Mitsein* in *Sein und Zeit* as an inauthentic (*uneigentlich*) mode of being, along with correlated views of *Mitdasein* and *Öffentlichkeit* that fail to address the *Sache* of social life in the *politikon*, seem to hinder an interlocution with Marxism and social phenomenology. After all, Heidegger’s critique of modern subjectivity entails the refusal of sociality understood as intersubjective dealings of subjects, even if they are supposedly co-constitutive of an ontical, social life of sorts. And yet the existential, ontological categories of being-with, being-there with us, with one another and *Dasein*-with seem to fall short of any sociological or empirical account in social philosophy. Starting with Sartre, Arendt and Bourdieu, many critics of Heidegger’s ambiguous attempts at ethical, political, and social accounts of collective existence unmasked his decisionist and normative deficits. If the Heideggerian formal-indicating conception of *Dasein* supposedly avoids reifying views of selfhood and subject-object dichotomies, isn’t such a quasi-transcendental view of a factually existing, finite being still akin to Kant’s and Husserl’s solipsism, minus the consciousness philosophizing? Habermas’s charges of transcendental historicism aimed at this very difficulty of bridging an ontological critique of philosophical anthropology and a post-Hegelian, historicized view of *Geist*, in its correlation of alterity (being-other) and objectification (being its other) vis-à-vis *Natur* or the natural becoming of beings (Habermas 1987). If historicity is ultimately what makes human destination (*Schicksal*, to render the Heraclitean *daimon* in its properly erratic *ethos*) so peculiar to its own self-understanding, how can one avoid the performative contradiction of self-transcendence? One of the best clues to a Heideggerian response to this problem can be found in the articulation of his phenomenological, ontological critique of objectification and the formal, indicative approach to an existential analytic of *Dasein*. As Heidegger remarks in his 1927 companion to *Being and Time*, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, “only a being with the mode of being of

the Dasein transcends, in such a way in fact that transcendence is precisely what essentially characterizes its being” (Heidegger 1982, 299). In that same text, Heidegger sets out to show that even though Kant’s transcendental philosophy unveils metaphysics as ontology and his “metaphysics of morals signifies the ontology of human existence” (Heidegger 1982, 137), his threefold view of personhood (*personalitas transcendentalis*, *psychologica*, and *moralitas*), as opposed to the thinghood and instrumentality of nonhuman beings, fails to account for the ontological grounds of human existence as an end in itself. Only in light of the ontological difference between Being (*Sein*) and beings (*Seienden*) can we find in temporality the condition of the possibility of transcendence and Dasein’s comportment toward beings. In Heidegger’s own words:

The distinction between Being and beings is there [*ist da*], latent in the Dasein and its existence, even if not in explicit awareness ... The *distinction between Being and beings is temporalized in the temporalizing of temporality* ... On the basis of temporality there belongs to the Dasein’s existence the immediate unity of the understanding of Being and comportment toward beings.

(Heidegger 1982, 318f.)

In his brief essay, I argue that the Heideggerian critique of reification thus conceived might indeed help us make sense of his conception of formal indication, within the semantic-ontological framework of his radical overcoming of metaphysics. Roughly speaking, we can hence assert that the reification of philosophical concepts in general and, in particular, of ontological and metaphysical conceptions, is what ultimately prevents us from understanding the question of the meaning of being and a non-reifying conception of human beings that are brought about by the formally indicated method of hermeneutic phenomenology. It is not only a matter of conceiving of whatever makes human beings “human,” but rather understanding human existence as the only way that avoids inappropriate, reifying conceptions of the peculiar mode of being human and human life overall. Like the term “formal indication [*formale Anzeige*],” the word “reification [*Verdinglichung*]” only occurs four times in *Sein und Zeit* (Heidegger 1962, 46, 114, 116, 313, 420, 437), but plays an important semantic function that pervades Heidegger’s masterpiece. The two primary tasks explicitly announced by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, to outline an ontological analytic of Dasein in order to reveal the transcendental horizon of temporality as a question of being, and to lay the groundwork for the destruction of the ancient ontology of Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, can be carried out depending on how the conjunction of a radicalization of the hermeneutics of facticity and a deconstruction of reifying concepts of traditional philosophy

is articulated. Hence what is hidden by the objectification and reification of the concept turns out to be revealed in their very unveiling in response to the *Seinsfrage* as applied to the Being of beings and especially to the mode of being of Dasein. In Heidegger's own words, in the very last page of *Being and Time*:

The distinction between the Being of existing Dasein and the Being of entities, such as Reality [*Vorhandenheit*], which do not have the character of Dasein [*nichtdaseinsmäßigen Seienden*], may appear very illuminating; but it is only the *point of departure* for the ontological problematic; it is nothing with which philosophy may tranquilize itself. It has long been known that ancient ontology works with 'Thing-concepts' and that there is a danger of 'reifying consciousness.' But what does this 'reifying' signify? (Heidegger 1962, 437)

As it has been convincingly shown by major studies on formal indication, Heidegger's problematic conception of language in the 1920s was indebted to the Neo-Kantian debates on the overcoming of both objectivist and subjectivist extremes in the metaphysical spectrum, as reflected in Husserl and Dilthey's research programs, between the realism of scholastic, Cartesian and empiricist strands, and the antirealism of Kantian and *Lebensphilosophie* in philosophical anthropology, psychology, and theology, as we easily infer from Heidegger's allusions to other influential contributions by Lask, Scheler, Cassirer, and Count Yorck (Streeter 1997; Hebeche 2001; von Herrmann 2005; MacAvoy 2010; Shockey 2010). Even though Bultmann's name is not mentioned in Heidegger's *magnum opus*, it is very instructive to recall that the former's demythologizing critique of objective historical research by means of a *Historie-Geschichte* opposition (say, between the historical Jesus and the *geschichtlich* Christ) can provide us with a useful clue to a proper understanding of the existential, historical sense of a hermeneutical self-understanding, as in the factual life of the primitive Church and their eschatological expectation in the very usage of formal indications of temporality, especially those relating to the last times: "now," "nigh," "tomorrow" and the *parousia*, the imminent coming of the Messiah (or the second coming of Christ). In several of his early writings from the second decade, especially in the ones dealing with religion, theology or Christianity, the young Heidegger thought of the primitive, eschatological community as the epitome of an experience of facticity and historicity of life that cannot be reduced to any theory or doctrine but can only be formally indicated as folly and scandal, insofar as there is no fixed "content" to be intended by consciousness (Heidegger 2004). This is in effect one of the major points of disagreement between Husserl's conception of meaning (*Bedeutung*) and Heidegger's, in that the latter avoids the fulfilling function of intentionality, as lived experience is

always prior to intuition. As Brazilian phenomenologist E.J. Stein has pointed out, we may divide the general plan of *Being and Time* into six major theses that translate the hermeneutical turn of phenomenology, namely:

1. The question of Being (*Seinsfrage*) which has today been forgotten is the question about the meaning of Being (*die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein*);
2. The fundamental analytic of *Dasein* unveils its transcendental structure, as *Dasein* is to be ultimately understood as the unveiling of human being in its existence, *Da-sein*—as it came out in Stambaugh’s felicitous translation—, meaning “being-the Da,” “the open” [*das Offene*], insofar as it brings about the clearance, *Lichtung*, the worlding of its being there in the open, being in the world, *Welt, a-letheia* (Heidegger 1998);
3. *Dasein* is thus properly understood as Being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*);
4. Being-in-the-world is correlated to care (*Sorge*) qua the Being of *Dasein*. So, in Heidegger’s own words in *Was ist Metaphysik?*, “the Being of those beings that stand open for the openness of Being in which they stand, by standing it—this ‘standing it,’ this enduring, is experienced under the name of *care*. The ecstatic essence of being-there is approached by way of care, and, conversely, care is experienced adequately only in its ecstatic essence” (Heidegger 1963, 214);
5. Care is temporal (*zeitlich*), insofar as time is the transcendental horizon for the question of Being;
6. Temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) is ecstatic insofar as *Dasein* is historical (*geschichtlich*), that is, finite temporality makes possible authentic historicity or “historicalness” (*Geschichtlichkeit*), by “choosing one’s fate [*Geschick*]” (Stein 1988).

It is my contention here that these theses may be fairly held in what may be regarded as a Heideggerian contribution to a social, ontological “philosophy of praxis,” as it were, alternative to Lukács’ and other neo-Marxist accounts—including of course Marx’s own materialist conception of history. The great debates that took place during the Cold War trying to reconcile phenomenology and Marxism paved the way not only to Sartre’s existentialist critique of dialectical reason and to the first generation of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse), but also to a Latin American philosophy of liberation, especially in the writings of Enrique Dussel in the 1970s and 1980s. My own interest in carrying on this debate further is precisely because expo-

nents of the second and third generations (Habermas and Honneth) have unveiled a phenomenological deficit of Critical Theory in the persistence of reifying pathologies in global capitalism, such as the colonization of the lifeworld by systemic structures of power and financial domination, and the forgetfulness of recognition in the reification of social relations as we disrespect the otherness of the other (for instance, in persisting social pathologies, such as racism, homophobia, chauvinism, Islamophobia, and the like). Since we can no longer resort to a religious, foundationalist account of humanity qua personhood in our post-secular, pluralist societies, and many philosophers avoid transcendental arguments that would take for granted the dignity and moral worth of the human species, it seems that hermeneutical, phenomenological accounts have become quite appealing in response to the normative challenges of naturalism and cultural relativism. I think that Heidegger's fourfold task in *Sein und Zeit* may thus support correlated conceptions of a phenomenology of justice and of perspectival conceptions of social ontology, intersubjectivity, and language. The very fundamental, ontological structure of Dasein allows for such a semantic correlation, as intersubjectivity and language are tied in with social lifeworldly practices and self-understanding. To recapitulate, Heidegger's fourfold project in *Sein und Zeit* can be thus summarized:

1. Fundamental ontology (*Fundamentalontologie*)
2. Existential analytic of Dasein (*Fundamentalanalyse des Daseins*)
3. Hermeneutics of facticity (*Hermeneutik der Faktizität*)
4. Deconstruction of Ontology (*Phänomenologische Destruktion der Geschichte der Ontologie*)

Now, this brings us back to the social, ontological problem at stake here in the very last section of *Being and Time*, namely, the problem of reification [*Verdinglichung*], which Lukács explored in an epoch-making essay ("Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat"), published in his 1923 masterpiece, *History and Class Consciousness*, a book that influenced the first generation of the Frankfurt School and was decisive for all neo-Marxist discussions throughout the 20th century (Lukács 2003, 83–222). According to Lukács, reification is caused by commodity fetishism, a social pathology described by Marx in the first volume of *Das Kapital*:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the

reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses ... There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities. (Marx 2007, I.1.4)

Even though Heidegger's conception of human praxis envisages activity as a fundamental mode of being, it does not view labour as social self-creation, equated with an objectifying process that seeks to transform and dominate nature, precisely because it calls into question such an object-subject opposition as assumed in German idealism and ancient ontology. Given the common sense primacy of this ontology of subsistence, of the "existence" of things present-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*), to the extent that the ancient ontology of things continues to conceal the mode of being of Dasein, we certainly cannot even reach the horizon of the transcendental question of being, which lacks an ontological clarification prior to this entity being properly understood in its own ontic and ontological terms. But the Marxian demystifying approach is still quite instructive, as the mode of being of Dasein is incommensurable with respect to that which is said to conform to worldly entities (*nichtdaseinmäßige*), as we fail to conceptually grasp this ontological difference by resorting to categorical signifiers. Formal indication does precisely this unveiling of the conceptual limitations of traditional philosophy and language. Moreover, reification is not limited to a regional ontology, for example, to philosophical anthropology, theology, cosmology, or social relations of human beings. The problem of reification, to be properly understood here in Heideggerian terms, shows itself and proves to be understood in the problematic ways of relating the being of Dasein with itself and its other, in its dealings with innerworldly beings, present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, "out there," "handy" and "available," as well as in their shared, common modes of being, lifeworlds and common forms of being with one another.

The problem of reification can be thus better understood by revisiting Marx's critical appropriation of Hegelian social philosophy, especially the young Marx's conception of "estranged labour [*die entfremdete Arbeit*],"² which plays a decisive

2. I am relying on the English translation by M. Milligan, edited by D. Struik, and on the German text of the Marx-Engels *Werke* edition.

role in the development of his mature critique of capitalism. “Estranged Labour” appears in the “First Manuscript”—which was still unknown when Lukács wrote his essay on reification—and introduces the important conception of “man”³ as “species being [*Gattungswesen*],” a key concept that is also elaborated in the “Third Manuscript,” particularly in “Private Property and Communism [*Privateigentum und Kommunismus*].” Marx’s philosophical anthropology, its critical overcoming of Hegelian idealism and Feuerbachian materialism, and its evolution towards a dialectical, materialist conception of history form together the background against which the Parisian *Manuscripts* should be read in relation to the maturation of Marxism as a whole. In order to avoid speculative digressions as to the importance of Marx’s early writings to the development of Marxism, I shall confine myself here to the philosophical anthropology outlined in these two Manuscripts.

“Estranged Labour,” as Marx avows from the outset, presupposes both the “language” and “laws” of “political economy” (Marx 1986, 106). The German *Nationalökonomie* clearly indicates that Marx is situating his analysis within the social, political milieu of the European reality of his days. More specifically, it refers to the German gradual appropriation of the economic ideas advocated by Adam Smith, Ricardo, and other Englishmen in a fast-industrializing society. The consolidation of European capitalism, the emergence of the working-class, and the social antagonisms of a bourgeois-dominated class society translated then the radical changes, which were taking place in the nineteenth century. For the young Marx, the main defect of the analyses elaborated by the “political economy” school consisted precisely in their failure to critically account for the contradictions reflected in the very historical, social conditions of their time. It was in this context that Marx sought to integrate his critique of political economy with French-inspired socialist theories and with the philosophical criticism of his own compatriots (notably Feuerbach and Young Hegelians).

“Political economy starts with the fact [*Faktum*] of private property,” Marx writes, “but it does not explain it to us” (Marx 1986, 106; 1973, 510). Political economy failed, above all, to elucidate the source of the division between “labour [*Arbeit*]” and “capital [*Kapital*]” and between “capital” and “land [*Erde*].” Thus Marx proceeds to elaborate on his conception of labour as essentially defining and fulfilling the very nature (*Wesen*) of human beings, as he radically denounces the self-estrangement of workers in capitalist society as a direct consequence of estranged labour itself. To start with Marx’s philosophi-

3. As a child of his own time, Marx uses the German word *Mensch* to designate both men and women, which is translated as “man” in English, understood in the supposedly universal sense of *humanum*.

cal conception of “man” would do a great deal of injustice to his critical project and even to the two texts at stake here. Marx explicitly seeks to start from the real, social condition of human alienation before outlining his own philosophical presuppositions. To be sure, the Hegelian and Feuerbachian terminologies employed in the *Manuscripts* betray the ideological motivations of his own overcoming of German idealism. And yet, even before venturing on defining what means to be human, Marx speaks of “property owners” and “propertyless workers,” real human beings exploiting other human beings. Having said this, we can recall Marx’s most famous quote in philosophical anthropology:

Man is a species being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species [*die Gattung*] as his object [*Gegenstand*] (his own as well as those of other things), but—and this is only another way of expressing it—also because he treats himself as the actual, living species; because he treats himself as a universal [*universellen*] and therefore as a free being [*freien Wesen*].

(Marx 1986, 112; 1973, 515)

Although he is employing a Hegelian terminology, Marx is rather following Feuerbach in his critical reversal of Hegel’s dialectics. In effect, according to Marx, Feuerbach’s great achievement consisted in having unmasked the theological foundations of Hegel’s anthropology, establishing the “true materialism” and “real science” of the “social relationship of man to man” and opposing to the Hegelian “negation of the negation” the absolute, “self-supporting positive.”⁴ As opposed to the “abstract” Hegelian conception of the “self-creation of man as a process” to be effected through the “externalization [*Entäusserung*]” of consciousness,⁵ Marx appropriates Hegel’s anthropogenesis in the “concrete” terms of Feuerbach’s communal materialism:

[J]ust as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him. Activity and mind, both in their content and in their mode of existence [*Existenzweise*], are social [*gesellschaftlich*]: social activity and social mind. The human essence of nature first exists only for social man; for only here does nature exist for him as a bond with man --as his existence [*Dasein*] for the other and the other’s existence for him-- as the life-element of human reality [*Wirklichkeit*].

(Marx 1986, 137; 1973, 537f.)

Although rejecting Hegel’s equation of human essence with self-conscious-

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4. Compare to “Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole” (Marx 1986, 172).
 5. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel outlines the history of the alienation process in terms of consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason. Compare to Marx’s “Critique of Hegelian Philosophy” (Marx 1986, 175ff).

ness, Marx concedes his indebtedness to the *Phenomenology's* dialectical relation of labour to human estrangement (*Entfremdung*), particularly as it was articulated in the last chapter on “Absolute Knowledge.” Nevertheless, Marx criticizes Hegel for remaining within the “one-sided,” mental objectification of self-consciousness, which cannot account for the real nature of humans (nor of nature itself, as “the other” of human beings). In order to surmount (*aufheben*) the alienation resulting from her opposing of nature (as “in-itself”) to herself (as “for-itself”), a human person must transcend the estrangement of self-consciousness in her externalizing relation to the object (*Gegenstand*) of her thought.⁶ And this is only made possible by starting from below, as it were, from the totality of social relations, which determine both the nature of human beings and their interactions with nature itself. Thus Marx adds:

Only here does nature exist as the *foundation* of his own *human* existence. Only here has what is to him his *natural* existence become man for him. Thus *society* is the unity of being of man with nature—the true resurrection of nature [*die wahre Resurrektion der Natur*—the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature [*Humanismus der Natur*] both brought to fulfillment.

(Marx 1986, 137; 1973, 538)

Now to return to the problematic of articulating “estranged labour” with human estrangement vis-à-vis nature and herself. We have seen that Marx’s conception of “man” as *Gattungswesen* is brought into play in his critique of “political economy.” In “Estranged Labour,” Marx criticizes the capitalist system for estranging from the worker both nature and her human essence. Because of his estranged labour, “the worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces”; indeed, Marx adds, labour ends up producing “the worker as a *commodity*” (Marx 1986, 107). In a nutshell, political economy has failed to take into account the “direct relationship between the worker (labour) and production” (Marx 1986, 109f.). And Marx finds in Hegel’s concept of “estrangement [*Entfremdung*]” the clue to this problem. However, as we have seen, “estrangement” is to be understood here not only in a theoretical sense but also primordially in human practical relations of production. It is indeed interesting to remark that, for Marx, “estranged labour” expresses a fact (*Faktum*), namely, the fact that the object (*der Gegenstand*) produced by the worker becomes “something estranged [*ein fremdes Wesen*]” from its producer (Marx 1986, 108). It is of fundamental importance to observe that, according to Marx, the problem with capitalism does not lie in the externalization process itself but in the lack of “self-realization” on the part of the worker. As he puts it:

6. Compare to “Critique of Hegelian Philosophy,” 179.

Labour's realization [*Verwirklichung*] is its objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*]. In the sphere of political economy this realization of labour appears as loss of realization [*Entwirklichung*] for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *bondage to it*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*.

(Marx 1986, 108; 1973, 512)

Now, in order to produce anything, the worker needs nature. Once again, the young Marx has followed Hegel's *Phenomenology* in his articulation of working subject and his work object (*Gegenstand*), external to him in nature. In capitalist society the worker, as expected, fatally becomes "a slave of his object," "nature's bondsman." Insofar as Marx elaborates on the relation of estrangement vis-à-vis the product of labour and the working subject (self-estrangement), his conception of "estranged labour" remains very much akin to the Hegelian dialectic of self-consciousness. It is only with the introduction of Feuerbach's concept of "man" as a species being that Marx's conception of "objectification" [*Vergegenständlichkeit*] will claim to operate a reversal of Hegelian terms. As we read in a passage quoted above, to assert that "man" is a *Gattungswesen* means that man "adopts the species of his object" (Marx 1986, 112; 1973, 515). As free beings, human beings must be able to appropriate external, natural beings in such a way that this externalization will not imply any loss of their essential realization as human beings. Both human and nonhuman animals live on nature, but to human nature alone essentially belongs "the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body [*unorganischen Körper*]" (Marx 1986, 112; 1973, 516). "Nature is man's *inorganic body*," says Marx, in that man's continuous interchange with nature makes human life itself possible. Moreover, only human beings make their "life activity" the object of their will and consciousness. "Conscious life activity," Marx adds, "distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity" (Marx 1986, 113; 1973, 517). Because man "proves himself a conscious being, i.e. as a being that treats the species as its own essential being," man alone can work so as to transform nature into a humanized, objective world. Human labour appears thus as the master key to the humanization of nature.

If "species being" describes human beings' ability to "produce" themselves through the process of objectification, "estranged labour" is precisely what "estranges the species from man" (Marx 1986, 112). Marx criticizes thus political economy for inverting the autonomous category of universality into individualist existence, as the alienated worker is estranged from his production in a capitalist division of labour. Humans' creative power to appropriate nature by objectification is reduced to their physical survival in complete estrangement

from themselves, from their own work, and—what is far worse—from their fellow humans (Marx 1986, 114). Marx goes on to denounce private property and wages as the same “direct consequence of estranged labour” (Marx 1986, 118). Marx operates thus a reversal of the critical analysis employed by political economy, in that private property unveils the real essence of social alienation.

In order to carry out a radical inversion of this analysis, Marx proposes by analogy that such an estrangement be abolished (*aufgehoben*) in the self-estrangement of private property’s subjective essence, labour. For Marx, the “transcendence of self-estrangement [*die Aufhebung der Selbstentfremdung*] follows the same course as self-estrangement” (Marx 1986, 132). To recover the truly human and social property, contradicted by the emergence of private property, human beings must overcome this contradiction by positively preserving labour as its subjective essence. Marx’s indebtedness to Hegelian terminology in the “Third Manuscript” betrays more than a semantic rapprochement; it also discloses the young Marx’s dependence on Hegel’s conception of historical process. The historical emancipation of the species being is indeed the “transcendental” outcome of Marx’s critique of Hegel’s philosophy of the subject. Of course, to speak of “transcendence” here is quite misleading, for Marx’s immanent critique remains faithful to the earth throughout. And yet Marx’s conception of man as a self-creating social being still subscribes to the German tradition of autonomy and universal subject. To be sure, Feuerbach’s anthropology of intersubjectivity (“man to man”) decisively contributed to the Marxian inversion of Hegel’s externalizing process, horizontally expanded to account for self-production and self-emancipation. Thus communism is invoked by Marx as the historical movement which resurrects the truly social nature and self-realization of human beings:

Communism as the positive transcendence [*Aufhebung*] of private property, as human self-estrangement [*menschlicher Selbstentfremdung*], and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being . . . This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution. (Marx 1986, 135; 1973, 536)

We must finally point out that Marx’s conception of objectification, which guided us from “estranged labour” to “the resurrection of nature,” stages in effect a quasi-messianic drama of liberation very reminiscent of a Hegelian odyssey of

the *Geist*, that would be decisive for Critical Theory's subtle rapprochement with Heidegger, as attested by Bloch, Marcuse, and liberationist appropriations in Latin America and Third World movements in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. As Rahel Jaeggi has pointed out in her magnificent study on alienation, the Marxian conception of work is still essentialist and related to an Aristotelian view of *ergon*, which lacks the critical input of post-Hegelian reflections on autonomy, emancipation and liberation (Jaeggi 2005). Moreover, as both Heidegger and Honneth rightly realized, a substantive philosophical anthropology underlies the Marxian semantic transformation of the Hegelian conception of the process of consciousness toward its material conditions in social existence, so as to regard objects that have value as objectified labour (Gould 1978). As Vandenberghe put it, we may fairly approach the original program of critical theory as a continual, systematic refutation of Lukács' theory of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*, insofar as any theory of the social can only be critical on the condition that it does not totalize reification (Vandenberghe 2009, 158).

By way of conclusion, I should like to evoke Axel Honneth's Tanner Lectures, delivered at Berkeley in 2005 and published in 2008 under the title *Reification*, in which he rescues a Heideggerian-inspired "forgetfulness of recognition" so as to rehabilitate the normative thrust of Lukács' rather descriptive account in intersubjective terms.⁷ For Honneth, in the course of our acts of cognition we tend to lose our attentiveness to the fact that this cognition owes its existence to an *antecedent* act of recognition. Honneth actually suggests that Heidegger's critique of *Seinsvergessenheit* in the heart of Western, metaphysical tradition has also fallen prey to such an *Anerkennungsvergessenheit*, as the social construction of reality unveils the intersubjective, communicative *presupposita* of Dasein's facticity and lifeworldly activities, in its *Stimmungen* and *Affekten* of primordial praxis of being-in-the-world. In effect, according to Honneth, "social-theoretical considerations remained so alien to Heidegger that he never even made the slightest attempt to question the social roots of the ontological tradition that he so thoroughly criticized" (Honneth 2006, 104).

In order to bridge the immanent critique of the sociological and normative deficits when dealing with the social pathologies of late and global capitalism, Honneth focuses on crucial points of convergence between Lukács and Heidegger before proceeding to throw light on their respective conceptions of socially engaged practice (*gesellschaftliche Praxis*) and care (*Sorge*) (Honneth 2006, 105ff.). Just as reification was, for Marx, the last stage in the worker's

7. I am relying on the original version (Honneth 2005) and in vol. 26 of the Tanner Lectures (Honneth 2006, 89–135). Compare with *Reification. A New Look at an Old Idea*, trans. J. Ganahl (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

alienation towards new forms of sociality (say, of a classless, communal society, as opposed to pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production), so is a correlated colonization and reification of the lifeworld, for both Habermas and Honneth, a distortion of communicative action and mutual recognition in globalized capitalism; here power struggles for emancipation make self-identity possible through the three forms of self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem in intersubjective accounts of recognition. Honneth interestingly remarks that Heidegger's highly original take on "care" seems to indicate little more than what is described today as the "perspective of the participant" in contrast to the perspective of a mere observer (Honneth 2006, 107). As Honneth observes:

Whereas the author of *Being and Time* intends to demonstrate that the mentalist language employed by traditional ontology only obstructs our view of the factual character of care in everyday existence, Lukács proceeds from the entirely different premise that capitalism's progressive reification eliminates any possibility of engaged praxis. Lukács thus conceives of his project not as unveiling an already present possibility of human existence but instead as a sketch of a future possibility. (Honneth 2006, 105)

The Heideggerian opposition between readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*) and presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) in the analysis of Dasein, as Honneth aptly remarks, avoids using the concepts of "object" and "thing" on the ontological level, as it rather employs the concept of "equipment" as a complementary category to "readiness-to-hand." This is certainly revealing; for the proximity between *poiesis* (thinking of human-made devices, artifacts and tools) and *praxis* is meant precisely to counter the primary relationship to the world as being constituted by a neutral confrontation with an "object" to be understood or objectively contemplated (*theoria*). Honneth's conception of recognition "shares a fundamental notion not only with Dewey's concept of 'practical involvement' but also with Heidegger's 'care' and Lukács's 'engaged praxis,'" to the extent that the notion that "the stance of empathetic engagement in the world, arising from the experience of the world's significance and value [*Werthhaftigkeit*] must be prior to our acts of detached cognition" (Honneth 2006, 111). So when we speak of reification as an "objectification of our thought," we end up caught in a totalizing process that allows for "no exit"—no way out of such an ontological totality. We can see thus how the concept of reification, originally formulated by Marx and Lukács, can be critically appropriated by Honneth in his recognition-theoretical diagnoses of social pathologies, by resorting to Heidegger's ontological recasting of praxis as care and existential modes of being. Besides the reified social processes of human intersubjective relations, Honneth also

envisages the possibility of self-reification and reification between humans and their environment, so as to go well beyond the reduction of reifying phenomena to the economic, systemic sphere as insinuated by Lukács's rapprochement between reification and commodity fetishism.

In the last analysis, Heidegger's radical critique of modernity is somewhat rehabilitated in Honneth's critical theory of recognition, addressing some of the misleading, ambiguous traces left by Habermas's apparent departure from the original Institute's social research program towards a radical critique of democracy, following his critique of aestheticism in Heidegger, Foucault, and post-modernists. Perhaps, as Dick Howard has thought-provokingly suggested, "the critical theory of society proposed by the Frankfurt School must be replaced by a political theory of democracy for which the autonomy of the political stands as that instance of negativity that cannot be co-opted into the new global world in which (not only geopolitical) boundaries are increasingly porous" (Howard 2000, 278). According to Honneth,

democratic societies evaluate their own social and political orders primarily in relation to standards of justice, because deliberations within the democratic public sphere are constantly confronted with issues and challenges that raise the question of whether particular social developments might be regarded as desirable beyond all consideration of what is just. In answering such questions—which are often termed "ethical" questions—a philosophically inspired social criticism can obviously not reserve for itself a sacrosanct interpretive authority. My hope, however, is that social ontology can provide us with the means to understand and criticize the social developments described here, which would in turn enrich public discourse with solid arguments and stimulate it in the process.

(Honneth 2006, 135)

If, on the one hand, we can easily understand that the formal indication of Dasein, as being in the world, points to a mode of being always already socialized, historicized, and linguistified, on the other hand, there remains the task of recovering the full sense of an ethics of finitude and of a normative pragmatism inherent in Heidegger. The problem of reification could serve in this case to indicate the way back from Frankfurt to Freiburg, dispelling misunderstandings and dialogues of the deaf engendered by endless quarrels involving neo-Kantian and neo-positivists in the reception of representatives of the first generation of the Institute for Social Research. In effect, Heidegger's conception of philosophy as a critical science (*kritische Wissenschaft*) is very instructive in our self-understanding of critical theory (*Kritische Theorie*) as a radical critique of instrumental, technological reason that converges on the Marxian correlation of the social patholo-

gies of alienation, self-estrangement, and reification as historical, social forms of objectification in intersubjective relations. This view seems to favor Lukács's take on "reification" as a "habitual form of praxis," as opposed to a "category mistake" or a "moral transgression," according to Honneth's *Reaktualisierung des Verdinglichungsbegriffes*. The mode of Being of Dasein (*Seinsart, Seinsweise*) must indeed account for its being always already there as an entity, as facticity is understood as the fallen mode of Being in its thrownness (*Befindlichkeit, Geworfenheit*), without being ever reduced to anything *vorhanden* or *zuhanden*, hence irreducible to any technique or instrumental action, let alone to mere means to meet worldly-determined ends, whether human or nonhuman. In addition to problems related to objectification, alienation, strangeness and otherness, thematized in Hegel, Marx and Lukács, a radical critique of reification, according to Honneth's recasting of a Heideggerian, *ursprüngliche Praxis*, can still pave the way to rescue the normative, intersubjective relations in our everyday practices of belonging, appropriation and expropriation, in our social engagements; here the notion of "formal indications" is taken together with the circularity of the hermeneutic method in a circle of understanding, that shows itself in an ontological understanding always already given and indicated, as it were, in factual life.

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