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PREVAILING WINDS: MARX AS ROMANTIC POET

Abstract. Inspired by Charles Taylor's locating of Herder and Rousseau's "expressivism" in Marx's understanding of the human as artist, I begin this essay by examining expressivism in Taylor, followed by its counterpart in M. H. Abrams's work, namely the wind as metaphor in British Romantic poetry. I then further explore this expressivism/wind connection in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and Marx's *The German Ideology*. Ultimately I conclude that these expressive winds lead to poetic gesture per se, and thereby, to a kind of poetry at the heart of Marx's philosophy.

EXPRESSIVISM IS CHARLES TAYLOR'S term for an anthropological theory originating in Herder and Rousseau and most evident in the Romantics and Hegel. Taylor also sees expressivism at work in Marx, in what he calls Marx's "Liberation Theory."¹ According to this theory, each human being has the nature of an artist, with the capacity for creative self-expression in acting on the world. Before turning to Marx's own writings, I will first examine more carefully Taylor's understanding of expressivism as presented in his book on Hegel. Second, I will consider the insights offered by a parallel presentation of expressivism in M. H. Abrams's essay "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," which discusses the metaphor of the wind as counterpart and inspiration to the poet's spirit. Third, I will consider how this metaphor might dovetail with the concept of expressivism, by means of a brief analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous "Ode to the West Wind." Fourth, I will examine Marx's *The German Ideology* in light of this wind-infused concept of expressivism. And finally, I will inquire as to what Taylor's concept of

expressivism, and its poetic parallel in the wind metaphor, might have to say about a sort of poetry at the heart of Marx's philosophy.

I

Expressivism evolves in Herder's work, Taylor claims, as a reaction against the objectification "of human nature, against the dividing of the human mind into different faculties, and of man into body and soul, and against a calculative notion of reason, divorced from feeling and will" in Enlightenment thought.² Taylor describes this conceptuality of expressivism as an "alternative anthropology"—an anthropology that has Aristotelian teleological roots, but which departs from Aristotle insofar as it focuses on the "realization of a purpose" in terms of a "realization of a self." In other words, this neo-Aristotelian conception must possess "the added dimension that the subject can recognize it [this life] as his own, as having unfolded from within him" (Taylor, p. 15). Taylor sees two basic strands of development in the concept of expressivism that outstretch Aristotelian categories. First, expressivism involves the idea that "realizing the human form involved an inner force imposing itself on external reality...". This internal/external dichotomy, Taylor claims, and the logically consequent ethical categories of independence and dependence, are indebted to Rousseau. Second, expressivism maintains that "the realization of a form clarifies or makes determinate what that form is" (Taylor, p. 16). Put differently, the medium or form of articulation is definitive for the message or content of articulation. One finds out what one is going to say, that is, by saying it.

One significant consequence of the idea of expressivism, for Taylor, is a renewed focus on language and art as the principal expressive vehicles, or "privileged media" of human beings (Taylor, p. 18). This focus, in turn, implies the "danger"—dangerous at least from the perspective of late-eighteenth-century thinkers, and from some contemporary perspectives as well—that language will be "supplanted by art as the paradigm human activity. The human center of gravity is on the point of shifting from *logos* to *poesis*" (Taylor, p. 18). More specifically, language's role is expanded in this conception from mere representation of the world to expressing the being of a subject. "Words," in the wake of Herder, "do not just refer, they are also precipitates of an *activity* in which the human form of consciousness comes to be" (Taylor, p. 19, emphasis added). Moreover, this emphasis on activity, as I will explore below, is even more pronounced in the expressivism of Marx.

In possessing this expressive capacity, language, Taylor claims, “is continuous with art.” Hence Herder’s view that “language in its origin is inseparable from poetry and song... and that the most adequate language united description of the world and expression of feeling” (Taylor, p. 20). And this expressive dimension in language is not merely one aspect of humanity among others; rather, a human being’s “highest fulfillment comes in expressive activity” and language, in its “highest functions, is continuous with art” (Taylor, p. 21). I will return below to language’s fundamental connection to art.

Expressivism, as Taylor characterizes it, and as it came to fruition first in Hegel and then later in Marx, is “strongly anti-dualistic,” and centrally concerned with freedom and human/nature interconnectedness. Taylor lists “four demands” of the expressive consciousness: “unity, freedom, and communion with man and nature” (Taylor, p. 28). In regard to these four demands, Taylor also discusses Schiller’s expressivist opposition to the division of labor in society. Given Marx’s famous preoccupation with the division of labor, this moment in Schiller already indicates how Marx’s thought might be sympathetic to the expressivist perspective.

According to Marx himself, Hegel’s expressivism is vitally connected to his “theory of the subject as a theory of self-realization” and more generally to his thought as whole.³ This self-realization, moreover, is not one isolated event, but instead a continuous activity. “Hegel,” Marx writes, “conceives the self-genesis of man as a process” (Marx, p. 112). This emphasis on process in particular, and on Hegel’s thought in general, was of course an enormous influence on Marx; “I therefore openly avowed myself,” he writes in *Capital*, “the pupil of that mighty thinker [Hegel]” (Marx, p. 302). Another issue that arises with Hegel’s conception of expression as expression-of-a-subject is authenticity. According to Taylor, only the expression of *a subject* can either accurately or inaccurately reflect the nature of the subject. Only when what I say conveys who I am can my speech be genuine or deceptive, illustrative or concealing, authentic or inauthentic (Taylor, pp. 30–31). “Being true to myself,” in this context, “means being true to my own originality, which is something only I can articulate and discover” (Taylor, p. 31). One finds a similar analysis and conception of expressivism, albeit in a different genre, in literary critic M. H. Abrams, to whose work I now turn.

II

Abrams rechristens the well-worn connection between breath and wind (found in literature, mythology, and elsewhere) as “air-in-motion,” in order to incorporate the senses of both breath and also natural wind.⁴ Frequently in Romantic poetry, Abrams notes, “the wind is not only a property of the landscape, but also a vehicle for radical changes in the poet’s mind” (Abrams, p. 37). The wind, that is, symbolizes not only the demonstrative power of natural forces but also the self-expression of the poet. Specifically, Abrams claims that the wind functions as a metaphor for (a) “the return to a sense of community after isolation,” (b) “the renewal of life and vigor after apathy,” and (c) “an outburst of creative power following a period of imaginative sterility” (Abrams, pp. 37–38).

Abrams acknowledges that this connection between “breeze, breath and soul, respiration and inspiration, the reanimation of nature and of the spirit” is not unique to Romantic literature. On the contrary, the connection is expressed in ancient texts in various cultures, and the etymologies of words such as *spiritus*, *animus*, *pneuma*, *ruach*, and *atman* (among many others) reflect this dual signification of “wind” and “breath” (Abrams, p. 44). “In myth and religion, moreover,” Abrams adds, “wind and breath often play an essential part in the creation both of the universe and of man.” Examples here include the story in Genesis in which God literally breathes life into Adam through the nose, and the “Stoic concept of the World Soul” as “a kind of breath, a divine gas, which infuses the material world and constitutes also the human psyche” (Abrams, pp. 45–46). By exploiting this connection in narrative, Abrams remarks, the Romantic poets give us merely “secularized versions of an older devotional poetry” (Abrams, p. 48). Interestingly for my purposes, moreover, this secularization is also reminiscent of Feuerbach’s reappropriation of religion in his particular version of humanism—a reappropriation that served as a springboard for Marx’s own departure from Hegel. And Shelley’s secularization of the wind/breath metaphor, finally, prefigures Marx’s praxis-revolutionary torsion of the expressivism he inherited from Herder and Hegel.

While acknowledging a certain physiological underpinning to an understanding of breath and wind “as instances of air in motion” and the idea of breathing as “a sign of life, and [of] its cessation [as a sign] of death,” Abrams rejects this transhistorical picture as too broad to be useful and meaningful in investigating this phenomenon in Romantic poetry (Abrams, p. 49). Instead, the most important concept for Abrams

in this context is the way the Romantic poets “exploited attributes of the wind which rendered it peculiarly apt for the philosophical, political, and aesthetic preoccupations of the age” (Abrams, p. 51). More specifically in this regard, Abrams asserts that the wind served “in the Romantic revolt against the world-view of the Enlightenment.” For instance, he argues, “the moving air len[ds] itself pre-eminently to the aim of tying man back into the environment.” Expounding on this point, Abrams notes that “nature’s breezes” are not only the analogue of human respiration; they are themselves inhaled into the body and assimilated to its substance—the “breezes and soft airs,” as Wordsworth said, “find [their] way / To the recesses of the soul,” and so “fuse *materially*, as well as metaphorically, the ‘soul’ of man with the ‘spirit’ of nature” (Abrams, pp. 51–52, emphasis added). This picture of humanity and nature as physically unified and interconnected finds its theoretical counterpart in Marx’s understanding of “the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature,” which I will examine below.

The final moment from Abrams’s essay that I consider is the following final moment of that essay itself:

Lastly, the Romantic wind is typically a wild wind *and a free one*—Shelley’s “thou uncontrollable”—which, even when gentle, holds the threat of destructive violence... These traits made the windstorm, as it had been earlier, a ready counter-part for the prophetic furor of the inspired poet. But they also rendered it a most eligible model for Romantic *activism*, as well as an emblem of the *free* Romantic spirit; and in an era obsessed with the fact and idea of revolution, they sanctioned a parallel, manifest in Shelley, with a purifying revolutionary violence which destroys in order to preserve. (Abrams, p. 52, emphasis added)

The potentially violent character of the wind metaphor, as it is here expressed and explicitly linked to the idea of revolution, has obvious resonance with the expressivist conception of humanity that led Marx to his revolutionary stance—to his call for a “purifying” violence from the proletariat. And although Marx did not consider himself a prophet, his passionate outcries against capitalism and boundless confidence in its eventual demise are certainly not wholly incompatible with the image of “the prophetic furor of the inspired poet.”

In Abrams’s essay I have observed various instances of expression well suited to Taylor’s understanding of expressivism. First, insofar as Abrams’s subject is Romantic poetry, his essay is clearly concerned with an instance of language in its “highest function”—the function of the

expression of feeling, in which language becomes, as Taylor claims, “continuous with art” (Taylor, p. 20). After all, poetry is, in various ways, where language first becomes art, and where art takes the form of language. Secondly, Abrams characterizes the wind as expressing both the nuances and extremes of nature and also the varieties of human emotional and intellectual life. For the natural wind, a human being or even a wind chime can serve as the medium through which nature is physically and metaphorically expressed. Finally, the metaphor of the wind even expresses philosophical issues belonging to the age of Romantic poetry—and of Marx. The wind expresses revolt against the Enlightenment, with its artificial divisions within and among persons, its separation of humanity from nature, and its political obstacles to freedom; and, in its destructive connotations, it even suggests a potential means of attaining that freedom, namely revolution.

What is perhaps most helpful in considering Abrams’s analysis, however, is the opportunity to isolate a single figure at the heart of expressivism. It offers us expressivism as wind, breeze, the correspondent breeze between humans and nature—as air-in-motion. To further explore and concretize the connections between Taylor’s expressivism and this wind metaphor, I now turn directly to the Romantic poet whom Abrams characterizes as “the most visionary and vatic,” deserving of “special attention”—Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his “Ode to the West Wind” (Taylor, p. 43). Due to limitations of space, I will not attempt a comprehensive analysis of this complex poem in its entirety, but merely draw attention to several key moments that harmonize with this expressive wind.

III

The first thing I wish to emphasize about “Ode to the West Wind” is its formal structure, specifically its character as an ode, a poetic form derived from Greek dramatic poetry. An ode consists of three divisions—strophe, antistrophe, and epode—and was originally performed by the Greek chorus. About this history of the ode, *The Handbook to Literature* notes the following: “Accompanied by music, the chorus of singers moved up one side during the strophe and down the other during the antistrophe and stood in place during the epode, a pattern that characterizes the rise and fall of emotion.”⁵ In this tripartite structure, and with its emphasis on process, one can begin to see similarities between the ode and the Hegelian dialectic, precursor to Marx’s own. The word *strophe* derives from the Greek word for “a turning”; *antistrophe* would therefore signify

a “counter-turning” or a “turning against”; while epode simply means that which is “sung after.” One can think of these “turnings” as moments in the Hegelian dialectic “turning against” each other in the unfolding of Spirit, thereby weaving itself like a melody or lyric.

In addition to this triadic structure, “Ode to the West Wind” is further divided into five equal, numbered stanzas, of which the first three seem to constitute the strophe, the fourth the antistrophe, and the final stanza the epode. I will first consider the first (non-numbered) stanza within the first (numbered) stanza:

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn’s being,
 Though, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.⁶

The first line begins its address to the West Wind with one modifier, the word “wild,” an adjective suggesting naturalness and freedom. The speaker of the poem calls the wind “thou breath of Autumn’s being,” already foregrounding the wind/breath connection, and describing the wind as the living respiration of nature personified in a capitalized Autumn. As Abrams notes, the wind is an “unseen presence,” an invisibility that befits a metaphor for subjectivity, with its imperceptible contents of the self (Abrams, p. 51). Thus, as in the case of the self, the wind is made known by its effects, by how it changes the world. Likewise, Marx insists repeatedly that an entity is known through its activity, through its productive actions with regard to the world; the essence, the inert substance of an entity such as a human being, is immaterial. More precisely, it is only in and through the actions of a human being that a human being’s essence is expressed. Here in the poem, one finds wind in the form, not of a thing-in-itself, but of that which dries one’s perspiration on a hot day, or supports the flight of migrating birds, driving forward the ghost-leaves reminiscent of Marx’s famous “specters” of communism.

As stanza 1 continues, the wind is depicted as scattering the dead leaves and depositing seeds in fertile ground. As Abrams also points out, it is through this dual function that the wind earns the epithets bestowed on it by the speaker at the end of the last (non-numbered) stanza within stanza 1:

Wild Spirit, which are moving everywhere;
 Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

The language of “Destroyer and Preserver,” with its connotation of a double role of destruction and production, is reminiscent of Hegel’s conception of Spirit as the negative energy of its own dialectic. This duality in the progression of Spirit, indicated by the German verb *aufheben*—meaning both “to raise, preserve, grow” and “to destroy, cancel, overcome”—illustrates how each moment in the dialectic of Spirit both annuls or cancels the previous moment, and also preserves and transforms that previous moment, even as the moment in question is overcome. The fact that the speaker addresses the wind here as a subject, and also as “Spirit,” further buttresses this Hegelian comparison.

Note, additionally, the second use in this stanza of the word “wild” to describe the Wind, in which one can hear freedom, and thereby Hegel’s conception of the *telos* of history as the realization of freedom in and for Spirit. Moreover, the “Spirit” in this stanza is described as omnipresent—“moving everywhere”—which is another description well suited to Hegelian Spirit. Finally, given Hegel’s massive influence on Marx (to the extent that both Marx and Engels describe Marx’s thought as an inversion of Hegel’s dialectic) these Hegel-resonant moments in the poem are also suggestive of similar resonances between the poem and Marx’s thought.

Stanza 4, the antistrophe, consists primarily of the speaker wishing to be filled with the wind like a falling leaf, to be consumed by the wind’s power, concluding with the speaker’s analogizing her/himself and the wind, saying that s/he is “too like thee [the Wind]: tameless, and swift, and proud.” One observes, in this development, a second consciousness arising to contend with the anthropomorphic wind—an inferior that wishes to be overpowered by, yet struggles for some independence from, a superior. And in regard to the struggle of two consciousnesses, of course, the thought of Hegel’s famous master/slave dialectic is unavoidable.

In stanza 5, the epode, one finds an overcoming of the simple opposition initiated in the previous stanza. The speaker expresses, in what might be a plea or a command: “Be thou, Spirit fierce, / My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!” The second consciousness here begs or demands a union or reunion of itself and the other, of the two winds. Perhaps this statement indicates an awareness, at some level, of the fundamental equality of the two, physically and metaphorically, of natural wind and human breath. “And, by the incantation of this verse,” the speaker continues, “Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!” Here, the speaker is defined, as a being, as a poet, by the articulation of her/his feelings. Through

“the incantation of the verse,” the words are spread, like bits of matter. And it is through shackling the forces of nature, a westerly wind, that this scattering is possible.

One sees here a crossing of the internal/external boundary. The inner spirit of the human becomes the physical wind. “Be through my lips to unawakened Earth,” the poem continues, “The trumpet of a prophecy!” Here the boundaries between “inner” and “outer” seem almost completely blurred. At first, the lips of the speaker are a mouthpiece for the natural forces of earth, but then the earth’s message is revealed to be a human phenomenon—a prophecy—indicating a second transformation. In the first transformation, the human becomes the natural; in the second, the natural turns back into the human.

Throughout the poem, expression manifests at two levels. On one level, the poem demonstrates and enacts expression, and in four distinct ways. First, given the period in which it was written, one can say with confidence that the poem is an expression of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Second, the poem itself is expressed as a dedication to a natural phenomenon as a personification of nature. Third, this natural phenomenon, the wind, is frequently described figuratively as a vehicle of expression for nature, in the wrath of the storm, for example, or a gentle breeze at dusk. And finally, this wind, the object of the poem’s expression, does in fact inspire, both physically and psychologically, the exact same type of being—a human being—that is the subject doing the expressing.

On the other level, expression is explicitly and systematically thematized. More specifically, the speaker of the poem talks about inspiration and expression as such, asks for inspiration, and voices her/his desire for expression. Both of these levels constitute a natural, dialectical circle of air-in-motion. The human is fundamentally natural, rooted in the earth, receives its inspiration from the earth, dedicates its efforts to the earth. In these expressive layers, then, one finds further evidence that Abrams’s Romantic wind metaphor is particularly apt for the expressivism of Marx, given its resonance, as illustrated in “Ode to the West Wind,” with Hegelian thought.

Having now considered expressivism from several angles—from Taylor’s analysis, Abrams’s essay on Romantic poetry, and Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind”—I now turn directly to the intersection of expressivism and Marx’s own texts.

IV

According to Taylor, as noted above, Marx's expressivism constitutes one of his two major contributions to contemporary thought—what Taylor terms his “Liberation Theory” (as distinguished from the explanatory dimension of Marx thought). Taylor claims that Marx has been appreciated and examined extensively in relation to the explanatory dimension (that is, his political economics), but that the other, humanistic dimension has not received the attention it deserves (BBC). As a central treatment of this expressivism can be found in Marx's *The German Ideology*, I now consider the following passage from it in detail:

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production. (Marx, p. 150)

There are several important points here, beginning with one sentence of this block quote in its entirety, “As individuals express their life, so they are.” This is a clear instance of expressivism as understood by Taylor, of expression as the realization and determination of the source of the expression, as in the case of the wind, which is known through its effects, its activity. What a human being is, for Marx, can be known by what that human being expresses. But this expression is not confined to verbal or artistic expression; rather, it is primarily associated with labor, with the practical life activity of human beings, as “modes of production.” Thus, expression manifests itself for Marx in all levels of human activity. One might even argue that the type of expression confined to consciousness, or consciousness itself, is effectively peripheral relative to more practical activity. “Life is not determined by consciousness,” Marx observes, for example, “but consciousness by life” (Marx, p. 155). One must bear in mind, however, that Marx is writing here in opposition to the dominance of idealism in German thought, making it strategically effective to overemphasize somewhat the noncognitive, nontheoretical aspects of life in order to compensate for what he perceived as an underemphasizing of those aspects in his intellectual milieu.

An incapacity for self-expression—or, better, the forcible prevention thereof—is what makes alienated labor so repulsive to Marx, with labor construed broadly as encompassing both (predominantly) physical and (predominantly) mental activity. As an example of alienation in mental labor, logic, Marx writes elsewhere, “is *alienated thinking*” (Marx, p. 111). Nonalienated labor, by contrast, is labor that is fulfilling, in which a person “affirms” her/himself, and develops “freely his physical and mental energy.” It is “spontaneous” and belongs to the worker her/himself (Marx, p. 74). Marx seems to have no ready-made phrase for this nonalienated labor, so I will refer to it as “expressive labor.”

Centrally related to Marx’s expressive labor is an adequate understanding of the relationships between human beings and nature, and of what nature means under capitalism, namely the human being’s “*inorganic body*” (Marx, p. 75). Conversely, therefore, humanity is embodied nature. “History itself is a *real* part of *natural history*—of nature’s coming to be man” (Marx, p. 91). In other words, “That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature” (Marx, p. 75). Marx does not characterize the nonconscious as inert substance; on the contrary, “the sensuous world [is] the total living sensuous *activity* of the individuals composing it” (Marx, p. 171). This sensuous activity depends, in turn, on natural conditions, on nature itself. Again one is confronted with a spectrum stretched between nonhuman nature and humanity, a continuum circling in on itself, a fundamental reciprocity. The wind breathes into human beings, the air mixing in our lungs, and we exhale the wind back into the world. The sound of the wind stimulates our imagination, and we write music about that sound. We design windmills to harness the wind’s power, and the wind blows through our machines.

This idea of the fundamental unity of humanity and nature is a good example of the type of holism which, according to Taylor, expressivism champions contra the Enlightenment’s compartmentalization. For Marx, however, only phrases are weak enough to be overthrown by phrases alone; if one wants merely to “to abolish the *idea* of private property,” he writes, “the *idea* of communism is completely sufficient” (Marx, p. 99). Social theory devoid of social practice, in other words, is inconsequential. The actual, practical unification of humanity and nature, by contrast, requires overthrowing the entire capitalist order. As Marx puts it, “the resolution of the *theoretical* antitheses is *only* possible in a *practical* way, by virtue of the practical energy of man” (Marx, p. 89). Only after such practical efforts could humanity prove itself, in the

postrevolutionary society, to be “the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature—the true resurrection—the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment” (Marx, p. 85).

Consequently, a rich conception of freedom is also central for Marx’s understanding of expressive labor, according to which “man produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom” (Marx, p. 76). Expression implies someone or something that does the expressing; individual expression implies different qualities to be expressed by different persons; and variety of expression implies some sense of creativity and novelty. Such creative novelty, in turn, necessitates a certain degree of freedom with which to exercise said expression. And this is the reason, finally, why Marx’s communist society, a true community, is necessary, for “only in the community... is personal freedom possible” (Marx, p. 197).

Although Taylor notes a tension between what he understands as the expressivist and the explanatory aspects of Marx’s thought, one can see here how the two aspects can in fact work in harmony. On the one hand, the economical level is indeed in a certain way constitutive of the rest of our lives, but on the other hand, our lives are the expression of ourselves in our activities—including, and perhaps especially, our economic activities. If, for example, an architect works eight hours a day, defining herself and being defined by others in terms of her career, then, at least for her, there is truth in this harmonious interpretation. How the individual expresses herself through creative architectural labor is in fact one of the fundamental aspects of who she is, not merely as an architect, but as a human being.

This compatibility between these two dimensions of Marx’s thought, moreover, suggests that this expressivist dimension might remain meaningfully operative (albeit implicitly) even in Marx’s later writings, despite his being more focused there on political (especially capitalist) economics. Or, to formulate this as a question, what justification might there be for assuming that Marx’s early expressivism is later abandoned simply because it is no longer explicitly thematized? In his famous concluding lines in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx writes: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win” (Marx, p. 500). Why, one might ask, should Marx the economist care about the chains of a group of human beings? Why should he care whether or not these proletarians “win”?

Why else, I would suggest, than because Marx believed that chaining a human being is a violation of her/his freedom, a diminishing or

elimination of her/his capacity for creative self-expression through labor. What else is there for the proletariat to win but freedom, including the freedom of self-expression? Contrary to the picture that emerges from superficial interpretations of his later work, Marx retains the scent, borne by this breeze, of a passionate humanist.

One of Taylor's most interesting comments with regard to Marx's Liberation Theory is that Marx "almost" offers "the vision of man as—and collective man, social man—as an artist." For Marx, in Taylor's view, human beings are entities capable (and perhaps even desperately in need) of creative self-expression. This insight, Taylor claims, shows the "immense importance that freedom has for a people in a modern civilization." Taylor further suggests that, in tension with Marx's picture of human history as governed by "inexorable laws" beyond any individual's or group's control, Marx's Liberation Theory offers the picture of a postrevolutionary future in which some things that were previously determined by these laws are "recuperated... for freedom" (BBC).

When one generalizes this idea of the human being as artist to Marx's understanding of the proletariat in postrevolutionary society, one sees a picture of a society that differs markedly from (what is usually interpreted as) Plato's ideal *polis* in the *Republic*. In Marx's ideal society, the artists (as tragic poets) are not merely free from exile; they are (as creative language-users) themselves the society in its entirety. Marx's conception of these creative language-users, therefore, reveals his sympathy with expressivism's conception of language and art as coextensive, because he offers us a description of a society made, in a manner of speaking, of poets.

V

In closing, I would like to gesture, beyond the limited scope of the present essay, toward gesturing as such, in its difference from straightforward articulation.⁷ As I observed earlier, in Taylor's account of the beginnings of expressivism in Herder, language becomes construed as continuous with art, specifically with regard to the functions or capacities of language. Ordinary language, previously categorized as representational or descriptive, now possesses an expressive, and therefore artistic, capacity. This opposition, based on their respective functions, however, is derived from a particular Romantic conception of poetry, not from poetry as a whole.

One can also distinguish poetry from ordinary language by their respective *means* of expression *or* description, rather than on conceptions of poetry-as-expressive and (ordinary) language-as-descriptive. After all, ordinary language too, like poetry, can express feelings. For example, I can use ordinary language, equally easily, to say, "There are two cars at that intersection" or "I am in love with her." What these sentences have in common in their expression is a straightforward, direct, demonstrative, declarative method of conveying their respective content. Poetry, on the other hand, is often described in its means of expression as allusive, metaphorical, gesturing, or indirect. Instead of explaining an emotional state by saying "I feel x," a poem is more likely to say, as does one of Robert Burns's poems: "O my luv's like a red, red rose." This gesturing, indirect character of poetry is relevant for the brief analysis that follows.

Marx himself characterizes his thought as being a radicalization of Feuerbach's critique of Hegel. "It is only with *Feuerbach*," Marx writes, "that *positive*, humanistic and naturalistic criticism begins" (Marx, p. 68). In what seems to be the decisive moment in Feuerbach's critique of and departure from Hegel, Feuerbach argues that Hegel does not refute the external world or external objects, but only the *ideas* of external objects. Hegel does this, Feuerbach argues, by basing his analysis on straightforward concepts in abstraction from concrete activity. As an alternative, Feuerbach suggests that Hegel could have utilized another *means* of expression in language, as I have referred to above, namely its ability to gesture.

More specifically, Feuerbach discusses the gestural phenomenon of indexical reference. When an individual, in real life, says, "I want *that*" and points to an object in a room, the word *that* acquires a contextual meaning, and thereby acquires a definite referent in the world. And the word "that" does so, in actual human practice, in a way that "that" mentioned out of context does not. "Why just the 'here' and not 'that which is here'?" Feuerbach asks of Hegel. "Why just the 'now' and not 'that which is now'?" In this way, the 'here' and the 'now' will never become a mediated and general 'now' for sensuous consciousness....⁷⁸

In other words, everyday usage of indexicals can be understood (to borrow the language of Wittgenstein) as a type of *showing* instead of *saying*. "Enough of words," Feuerbach writes, "come down to real things! *Show* me what you are talking about!" (Feuerbach, p. 114). In support, but also critical, of Feuerbach, I suggest that words per se should not be rejected, but rather a narrow, philosophically conventional *use* of words.

Instead of using words only in that way, one can instead additionally use words to show things, that is, use language that gestures beyond rigid conceptual thought. Concepts are universal, but indexicals are determined by the context in which they are used. Every use of “now” is a particular “now” for a particular, actual person. This nature of particularity in such activity, Feuerbach seems to be saying, is what gives words a privileged access to external objects.

To resolve Feuerbach’s (and also Marx’s) problem with Hegel, then, might mean to make use of the capabilities of language for indirection, by means of phenomena such as metaphor, irony, and even shouting. In these ways, language *gestures* toward things—it *shows* instead of *saying*. That (a) there is, in this moment of Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel, a focus on gesturing; that (b) gesturing is a form of activity; and that (c) such activity implicates Feuerbach’s critique as founded in practice, are not, I acknowledge, uncontroversial claims. Nevertheless, I will go just one step farther.

Insofar as gesturing and indirection in general are characteristic features of poetry as distinguished from ordinary language, and insofar as this gesturing is what makes it possible for Feuerbach to step outside of the circle of Hegel’s rhetoric (and thereby to point to activity in the everyday world), one might say that there is a certain poetic feature to the origin of Feuerbach’s departure from Hegel. Alternatively, utilizing the Greek triad of *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*, one might say that this move of Feuerbach seems to belong more to *praxis* in the sense of activity in the world, and to *poiesis* in its broader, more original sense of “making”—of something making something new in the world with its very gesture, its pointing, its indirect presentation—than with *theoria*.

Could it really be the case that Feuerbach’s philosophical divergence from Hegel is not only better explained by reference to practical expedients than theoretical claims, but also better explained via poetic gestures than via theory? If so, since Marx avows his thought to be an extension of Feuerbach’s critique of Hegel, this would also mean that Marx’s further departure from Hegel necessarily shares this practical/poetic basis. In support of this contention, Taylor, as the reader may recall, speaks of both language as “continuous with art” in expressivism, and also a significant shift “from *logos* to *poesis*.” Furthermore, Taylor also describes language under the expressivist rubric as “inseparable from poetry and song” (Taylor, p. 22).

One might argue, therefore, that Marx shares more with the Romantic poets than merely a version of expressivism and its metaphorical

embodiment in wind. Despite Marx's self-understanding as a scientist and naturalist, he would prove to be, in his expressivism, in the so-called "Liberation Theory," something of a poet—a gesturer, a maker, a creator—at least in the origins of his thought.

In this connection, it is known that Marx wrote poetry, at least in his youth. And though it appears from the following quote that he was dissatisfied with its technical merit, he nevertheless expresses—and in poetic language—that he too saw in himself the fiery spirit of a poet, and arguably that of a Romantic in particular: "All of the poems of the first three volumes I sent to Jenny," Marx writes, "are marked by attacks on our times, diffuse and inchoate expressions of feeling, nothing natural, everything built out of moonshine, complete opposition between what is and what ought to be, rhetorical reflections instead of poetic thoughts, but perhaps also a certain warmth of feeling and striving for poetic fire."⁹ I can go no further here, however, than to suggest this as a possibility and an opening for further thought.

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1. Charles Taylor, in discussion with Bryan Magee, "Marxist Philosophy," in the Contemporary Philosophy film series, *A BBC Production* (Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2003); hereafter abbreviated BBC.
2. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 15; hereafter abbreviated Taylor.
3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd Ed.*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 302; hereafter abbreviated Marx.
4. M. H. Abrams, "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor," in *English Romantic Poets: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 37; hereafter abbreviated Abrams.
5. *A Handbook to Literature, 9th Ed.*, ed. William Harmon (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003), p. 349.
6. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Ode to the West Wind," in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry, 4th Ed.*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy (New York: Norton, 1996), pp. 801–3.
7. The topic of gesture, and its connection to poetry (along with dance) is one which I explore in detail elsewhere, for example, in Joshua M. Hall, "Choreographing the Borderline: Dancing with Kristeva," *Philosophy Today* 52 (2012): 49–58.

8. Ludwig Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," in *The Young Hegelians*, ed. William J. Brazill (New Haven: Yale, 1970), p. 115; hereafter abbreviated Feuerbach.
9. Marx, p. 7. Additionally, and in conclusion, Marx also utilizes poetry in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, quoting Goethe and Shakespeare to illustrate their understanding of how money really functions in a society (Marx, p. 103).