
Critical Philosophy
Vol. 1. No. 1.

Editor: Paul Crittenden.
Review Editor: Stephen Gaukroger.
Editorial Committee: Paul Crittenden, Stephen Gaukroger,
Genevieve Lloyd, Kim Lycos.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

FOR NEW SUBSCRIBERS, subscription rate for next three issues Aus.\$15.00 for individuals and Aus.\$22.00 for institutions in Australia and New Zealand (Aus.\$18.00 and Aus.\$25.00 respectively for overseas subscribers other than from New Zealand).

FOR CURRENT SUBSCRIBERS, the annual subscription rate from 1985 is Aus.\$10.00 for individuals and Aus.\$17.00 for institutions in Australia and New Zealand (Aus.\$13.00 and Aus.\$20.00 respectively for overseas subscribers other than from New Zealand).

Please send payment with your name and address to: The Secretary, *Critical Philosophy*, Department of General Philosophy, The University of Sydney, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, 2006.

Articles intended for publication should be typewritten, on one side of the page, with double spacing and wide margins, preferably on A4 size paper. All manuscripts and editorial communications should be addressed to:

The Editor, *Critical Philosophy*,
Department of General Philosophy,
The University of Sydney,
Sydney, N.S.W., 2006, Australia.

Please note. Manuscripts will not be returned unless authors provide self-addressed envelopes with correct postage.

Books for review should be sent to the Review Editor, *Critical Philosophy* (address above).

Correspondence with contributors: please write c/- of the journal.

Critical Philosophy

Vol. 1 No. 1

CONTENTS

A Word of Introduction	3
Critical Philosophy Conferences	4

Articles

G. Lloyd, History of Philosophy and the Critique of Reason	5
R. Poole, Reason, Self-interest and "Commercial Society": The Social Content of Kantian Morality	24
<u>P. Springborg, Marx, Democracy and the Ancient Polis</u>	47
G. Markus, Interpretations of, and Interpretations in Philosophy	67

Review Article

E. Sadler, Review of K.-O. Apel, <i>Towards a Transformation of Philosophy</i>	86
--	----

Reviews	94
---------------	----

Adorno, T.W., *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique. Studies in
Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, Baker, G.P. &
Hacker, P.M.S., *An Analytical Commentary on Wittgensteins
Investigations*, Baker, G.P. & Hacker, P.M.S. *Wittgenstein:
Meaning and Understanding*, Chalmers, A.F., *What is this Thing
Called Science? An Assessment of the Nature and Status of Science
and its Methods*, Cohen, R.S. & Wartofsky, M.W. (eds.)

⁶⁵ The distinction between formal, i.e. juridical, and substantive, i.e. means/end, rationality is drawn by Max Weber in his analysis of bureaucracy, but both are conceived of as equally characteristic of bureaucratic behaviour. See, e.g. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.): *For Max Weber*, London, Henley & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948; reprinted 1977, Ch. VIII, especially 214-16, 220-21. For a development of Weber's insights along the lines made use of here see Goran Therborn: *What the Ruling Class Does When It Rules*, London: NLB, 1978, 51-56.

⁶⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre's pathbreaking *After Virtue* London: Duckworth, 1981, is a significant exception to these comments. However, even MacIntyre provides no systematic account of the features of modern society which militate against a morality of virtue and his own gestures towards reviving the social practices which would make such a morality possible are little more than whistling in the dark.

⁶⁷ Thanks to Jerry Cohen, John Kleinig, Carole Pateman, Arnold Zuboff and — especially — Jenny Lloyd for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

MARX, DEMOCRACY AND THE ANCIENT POLIS

Patricia Springborg

There is no doubt, I think, that Marx's classical education produced an understanding of and curiosity about antiquity that greatly influenced the formation of his central concepts and essentially never left him. G.E.M. de Ste Croix in his excellent work *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* makes the case convincingly that a Marxist analysis of class struggle in antiquity not only elucidates the historical dynamics of the period, but congrues with the very categories in terms of which the great thinkers of antiquity analysed their own society. Plato considered, but rejected, the assertion (presented by Thrasymachus) that society is ordered as the outcome of a struggle for power in which the ruling class rules in its own interests. He tried to make the counter case that not only was politics properly unrelated to a struggle for power, but that knowledge or expertise was the necessary and sufficient condition for politics. But Aristotle in his critique of Plato's theory of politics as the legitimate realm of experts and technocrats more or less concedes the position that was concerned to refute — that politics is governed by the struggle for power — and in the very terms that Thrasymachus argued it. Plato

Aristotle takes up Plato's argument that the greatest threat to any society is a widening gap between the rich and the poor, a claim that already suggests that social class is a significant factor in determining the constitution of society. Plato's definition of revolution as a split in the ruling class concedes what he was at pains to deny, class rule, and Aristotle openly admits that *polity* as a constitutional form represents a formula to hold in check the perennial class struggle. *Polity* or the mixed constitution is designed to effect a class balance directly related to property holding. Based as it is on the 'moderate element' (*toi mesoi*, or the middle classes as the term is often translated), *polity* reflects Aristotle's assumption that men of moderate income are men of moderate opinions, or that the class interests of those of moderate property holdings come closest to the interests of the majority.

It is very probable that the role of class in Marx's theory, generally conceded to be his major contribution to the science of political economy, represents an elaboration of the idea in antiquity and in particular, in Aristotle. We know from Marx's own acknowledgements how indebted he saw himself to this thinker, variously praised by him as 'the acme of ancient philosophy'

(M.E.C.W. vol. 1, 424), 'the greatest thinker of antiquity', a Giant thinker, etc. (*Capital*, vol. 1, London, 1970, 408, 82n).

Although Marx wrote no published work on antiquity after his doctoral dissertation, he constantly reread the classical authors, usually in the original, revising the history of Rome under the Republic in the middle 1850s, rereading Appian on the Roman civil wars, in the original Greek, and Thucydides in the early 1860s. By 1857-58, when the notebooks constituting the *Grundrisse* were composed, Marx had completed a study of the Roman Republic using Niebuhr, Mommsen and other contemporary authorities, as we know from the extended discussion of the ancient commune in that work (*ibid.*, 471-503). And in 1880-82, Marx excerpted and critically reviewed the work of Lewis Henry Morgan on *Ancient Society*, and of Henry Sumner Maine on the *Early History of Institutions*. These works, taken in conjunction with the brief treatment of democracy and the state in Marx's *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, and the historical treatment of the origin and development of modes of production in *The German Ideology*, enable us to piece together Marx's account of the origins of the state and class society. For the phenomenon of class society, as Marx identifies it, was historically rooted in the emergence of the Athenian polis, and coincided with the decline of primordial society based on communal property as he saw it. This process had been accelerated by the reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes who attached to class categories power and privilege that had been transferred from tribal offices, in order to reduce the divisive effects of family clan and tribe within the city state. While the classical polis succeeded in holding in suspension both class and primordial elements under democracy, admitting the poor to citizenship and power, the process which began with the decline of public (communal) property, concluded in the modern state, with the erosion of political sphere as such, which lacking a power base in communal property, became a mere ideological construct for private property and class rule. Marx follows the implications of this argument through in works from 1843 to 1882.

In the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* Marx undertakes a quite passionate defense of democracy and, at the same time, an equally passionate condemnation of bourgeois society, extending arguments implicit in Aristotle. His argument for a privileged relation between democracy and the concept of the 'political' is consistent with Aristotle's definition of political as 'rule of the free'.¹ As Marx remarks, the precise meaning of *zoon politikon* requires that one read 'political' as synonymous with 'civic', meaning both that man is by nature a town dweller and that civic life is characteristically democratic and free.²

As several authors have suggested, Marx in the *Critique of*

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* makes a case for democracy as a privileged form of constitution in terms almost identical to those later made for communism in the 1844 *Manuscripts*. Just as in the later work communism is the solution of the antithesis between existence and essence, form and content, individual and species, the riddle of history solved that knows itself to be that solution, so in the 1843 *Critique* democracy is all of these. Democracy is the 'generic constitution' to which monarchy stands as species (p.29)³; democracy is 'content and form' since the state is essentially the *demos* and democracy is government of the people (*ibid.*); 'democracy is the resolved mystery of all constitutions' (pp.29-30): 'it is the constitution not only in itself, according to essence, but according to existence' (p. 30); it is the constitution 'returned to its real ground, actual man and actual people and established as its own work' (*ibid.*). In a word, in democracy 'the constitution appears as what it is, the free product of men' (*ibid.*).

Marx draws a parallel between democracy and Christianity:

In a certain respect democracy is to all other forms of the state what Christianity is to all other religions. Christianity is the religion *kat' exochain*, the essence of religion, deified man under the form of a particular religion. In the same way democracy is the essence of every political constitution, socialised man under the form of a particular constitution of the state. It stands related to other constitutions as the genus to its species; only here the genus itself appears as an existent, and therefore opposed as a particular species to those existents which do not conform to the essence. Democracy relates to all other forms of the state as their Old Testament. Man does not exist because of the law but rather the law exists for the good of man. Democracy is *human existence*, while in the other political forms man has only *legal existence*. That is the fundamental difference of democracy. (p.30)

One might be tempted to dismiss this early defence of democracy were it not that in his last years Marx returned to the subject from the perspective of cultural anthropology, undertaking a study of the historical process by which the 'political' or civic realm was created out of primordial Greek society characterised by family, clan and tribe.

In the *Ethnological Notebooks*, the form in which this research has come to hand, Marx, by way of a gloss in the texts of the anthropologists Morgan, Maine, Phear and Lubbock, traces historically the process already outlined theoretically in *The German Ideology* by which the state emerges from the gradual extension of affinal groups which the mode of production throws

off. Thus family, tribe and village give way to the city stratified by class as the economic mechanisms of division of labour and exchange work to erode communal forms of labour and ownership in favour of larger economic units. In this study Marx develops the implications of Aristotle's conception of the archaic community as constituted by the fundamental associations of husband and wife, master and slave, investigating as Aristotle did the attempts by the reformers Solon and Cleisthenes to sever ties of blood and soil by introducing horizontal divisions of occupation and class as politically significant (Solon) and, alternatively, reconstituting vertical cleavages of family, clan and tribe as artificial rather than affinal units (Cleisthenes).⁴ Marx, following Aristotle, sees property as the dynamic element in the shift from primordial to political society.

Orthodox accounts of the historical expansion of the *polis* and its reference as a term which applied first to the royal citadel, and ultimately the community of the city state, posit a corresponding devolution of power in the successive pure types of regime, monarchy, aristocracy and democracy, which were experienced sequentially. Consistent with this account Marx sees the transition from Mycenaean kingship to Homeric aristocracy and Periclean democracy in terms of an increase in private property, specialisation of labour between agricultural and manufacturing activity and some specialisation of function at the municipal level. The outcome of this process, which saw the co-option by the collectivity of the tribal titles and functions of *basileus* or warrior king, *boule*, or council or tribal chiefs and *agora*, or assembly of arms-bearing males, was the eventual destruction of the tribal order which had hitherto monopolised these functions.⁵

Aristotle was the first to remark on the function of money-making for its own sake (*chrematistike*) in the erosion of primordial ties, which he distinguished from household management (*oikonomia*), legitimate economic activity geared to the preservation and maintenance of the household (*oikos*) and the community.⁶ Marx's analysis of the transition from gentile (from *gens*, tribe) to civil society is with explicit reference to Aristotle, whom he interprets as maintaining conflict of interest between 'the chiefs of *gentes*... (and) the mass of *gentes*, which is inevitably connected with the monogamous family through private property in houses, lands, herds', as the cause.⁷ Property in land, conversely had its origin 'partly from the *disentanglement of the individual rights of the kindred or tribesmen from the collective rights of the Family or Tribe*... partly from the *growth and transmutation of the Sovereignty of the Tribal Chief*'.⁸ The Homeric aristocracy emerged as an agrarian war-lord system in which as in subsequent feudal systems '*much of the tribal territory appears to have been permanently alienated to subtribes, families, or dependent chiefs*', while the 'chief source of nobility seems to have been respect of the

co-villagers or assemblages of kinsmen for the line of descent in which the purest blood of each little society was believed to be preserved.'⁹

Marx's observations of 1881-82 on the erosion of tribal society, based on communal property, in favour of the state based on private property take up a theme developed as early as the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and the discussion of democracy therein and resumed in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* vol. 3. In the *Grundrisse*, undoubtedly with reference to Aristotle, Marx noted:

All previous forms of society — or, what is the same, of the forces of social production; — foundered on the development of wealth. Those thinkers of antiquity who were possessed of consciousness therefore directly denounced wealth as the dissolution of the community.¹⁰

It is in the *Grundrisse*, indeed, that Marx's most succinct theoretical statement of the conditions for the production and reproduction of tribal society is to be found:

In all these forms — in which landed property and agriculture form the basis of the economic order, and where the economic aim is hence the production of use values, i.e. *the reproduction of the individual within the specific relation to the commune in which he is its basis* — there is to be found: 1) Appropriation not through labour, but presupposed to labour; appropriation of the natural conditions of labour, of the *earth* as the original instrument of labour as well as its workshop and repository of raw materials... 2) but this relation to land and soil, to the earth, as the property of the labouring individual... is instantly mediated by the naturally arisen, spontaneous, more or less historically developed and modified presence of the individual as *member of a commune* — his naturally arisen presence as member of a tribe etc.¹¹

That society has its origins in the primordial forms of family, clan and tribe and their corresponding forms of property, Marx is certain. History represents the slow process by which the individual extricates himself as a person with rights from the primordial networks of status and kinship which fully prescribed his conditions of existence:

An isolated individual could no more have property in land and soil than he could speak. He could, of course, live off it as substance, as do the animals. The relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the

occupation of the land and soil, peacefully or violently, by the tribe, the commune, in some more or less naturally arisen or already historically developed form. The individual can never appear here in the dot-like isolation in which he appears as mere free worker, if the objective conditions of his labour are presupposed as belonging to him, then he himself is subjectively presupposed as member of a commune, through which his relation to land and soil is mediated. His relation to the objective conditions of labour is mediated through his presence as member of the commune; at the same time, the real presence of the commune is determined by the specific form of the individual's property in the objective conditions of labour.¹²

Marx, unlike Rousseau, the Physiocrats and classical political economists, considers the institution of property to be logically prior and, historically, to have long preceded the emergence of the possessive individual.¹³ Political society, which already presupposes the duality of civil society and the state, thus marked a stage in the dissolution of tribal society and the extrication of individuality and private property from the tribal nexus. The *polis* holds in suspension tribal and communal forms while inaugurating the state as a phenomenon. Its development is a complex and uneven process:

Whether this property mediated by commune-membership appears as communal property, where the individual is merely the possessor and there is no private property in land and soil — or whether property appears in the double form of state and private property alongside one another, but so that the latter appears as posited by the former, so that only the citizen is and must be a private proprietor, while his property as citizen has a separate particular existence at the same time — or, whether, finally, the communal property appears only as a complement to individual property, with the latter as the base, while the commune has no existence for itself except in the assembly of the commune members, their coming-together for common purposes — these different forms of the commune or tribe member' relation to the tribe's land and soil to the earth where it has settled — depend partly on the natural inclination of the tribe and partly on the economic conditions in which it relates as proprietor to the land and soil in reality, i.e. in which it appropriates its fruits through labour, and the latter will itself depend on climate, physical make-up of the land and soil, the

physically determined mode of its exploitation, the relation with hostile tribes or neighbour tribes, and the modifications which migrations, historic experiences etc. introduce. The survival of the commune as such in the old mode requires the reproduction of its members in the presupposed objective conditions. Production itself, the advance of population (this too belongs with production), necessarily suspends these conditions little by little; destroys them instead of reproducing them etc., and, with that, the communal system declines and falls, together with the property relations on which it was based.¹⁴

The historical process which saw the gradual dissolution of the ties of blood and soil was characterised variously as the shift from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft*, as Marx foreshadows this distinction; from *societas* to *civitas* or from gentile to civil society, as the terms in which Morgan made the distinction; or the shift from *status* to *contractus* as it was conceived by Maine.¹⁵ This process is posited as producing simultaneously the phenomenon of the political. The *polis* as an urban commune in which private property existed alongside communal property already accorded its citizens the free and equal status which the need to contract for the sale of labour power ultimately required. However, the citizen of the *polis* was historically banned from manual labour, which was performed by slaves, so that political life existed prior to and independently of the exigencies of economic contractual relations as they subsequently developed. To say that Marx recognises the relative autonomy of the political sphere can be spelled out in terms of his recognition of the unique process out of which the *polis* emerged and which constituted a devolution of social power from the Mycenaean Kings through the Homeric aristocracy to the democracy of Periclean Athens. It is the Aristotelian conception of the political as 'rule of the free' which informs Marx's defence of democracy, providing the clue to his paradigmatic claim made in response to his critic who maintained that, while the economic mode of production might determine the way of life of the modern world governed by material interests, this is not true for 'the middle ages', in which *Catholicism*, nor for Athens and Rome, where politics, reigned supreme'.¹⁶ Not so, Marx replied: 'the middle ages could not live on Catholicism, nor the ancient world on politics. On the contrary, it is the mode in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics, and there Catholicism, played the chief part'.¹⁷

This conception of the political is first outlined by Marx in *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* in some detail and later elaborated in the *Grundrisse*. In the 1843 *Critique* Marx undertook a defence of democracy (as it emerged in the wake of the reforms of

Solon and Cleisthenes) as a system whose principles actually govern; democracy represents the logical form of the state in which formal and material principles coincide and the people rule and are ruled.¹⁸ Under the rubric of democracy first the abstract distinction between civil society and the state, and secondly the state itself as abstraction are surpassed, Marx claims. Thus in true democracy 'the political state disappears'. (Clearly Marx has in mind representative democracy of the modern era as the ultimate development of the nation state, rather than the classical democracy of antiquity. Nevertheless his claim for democracy as the unique form of the political is not confined to its modern form).

In all states distinct from democracy the state, the law, the constitution is dominant without really governing, that is, materially permeating the content of the remaining non-political spheres. In democracy the constitution, the law, the state, so far as it is political constitution, is itself only a self-determination of the people, and a determinate content of the people. Furthermore it is evident that all forms of the state have democracy for their truth, and for that reason are false to the extent that they are not democracy.¹⁹

He adds a rider:

In the ancient states the political state shaped the content of the state, with the other spheres being excluded; the modern state is an accommodation between the political and non-political state.²⁰

In the *Grundrisse*, *Capital* and finally the *Ethnological Notebooks* Marx is able to specify this theory of the political in antiquity in his conception of the ancient commune as it developed out of tribal society to offset the push and pull of primordial ties so that the demos was ultimately co-extensive with the polis.²¹ The achievement of the ancient polis, as opposed to tribal society (and Marx contrasts it specifically with the Germanic tribes), is that the commune itself as an entity mediates the relationship between ownership and property. Thus the citizen, as participating in the decision-making of the polis through democratic institutions, shares in the disposition of the economic surplus:

In the world of antiquity, the city with its territory is the economic totality; in the Germanic world, the totality is the individual residence, which itself appears as only a small dot on the land belonging to it, and which is not a concentration of many proprietors, but the family as independent unit.²²

As regards property itself: 'in antiquity, (Romans as the most classic example, the thing in its purest most developed form), the form of state property in land and that of private property in land are antithetical, so that the latter is mediated by the former'.²³ This is sharply contrasted with Germanic society where 'individual property does not appear mediated by the commune' and 'the economic totality is, at bottom, contained in each individual household, which forms an independent centre of production for itself (manufactures purely as domestic secondary task for women etc.)'²⁴

Marx does not deny the significance of family, clan and tribe in the polis. 'There was in the world of antiquity no more general institution than that of kin groups',²⁵ he remarked, distinguishing clans based on locality from ancestral clans with reference to the reform of the clans of Attica under Cleisthenes, as well as the Roman *gentes*. It was not the presence or absence of primordial ties that distinguished tribal from political society, but formalisation of the commune in the city-state. 'The history of classical antiquity is the history of cities', Marx declared, 'but of cities founded on landed property and on agriculture'.²⁶ By contrast:

Among the Germanic tribes, where the individual family chiefs settled in the forests, long distances apart, the commune exists, already from *outward* observation, only in the periodic gathering-together of the commune members, although their unity-*in-itself* is posited in their ancestry, language, common past and history, etc. The commune thus appears as a *coming-together* not as a *being-together*; as a unification made up of independent subjects, landed proprietors, and not as a unity. The commune therefore does not in fact exist as a *state* or *political body* as is classical antiquity because it does not exist as a *city*.

The polis of antiquity represents a development from the spontaneous clan community of pastoral society where the commune itself — 'the communality (*Gemeinschaftlichkeit*) of blood, language, customs' — is 'the first presupposition... for the appropriation of the objective conditions of their life, and of their life's reproducing and objectifying activity (...as herdsmen, hunters, tillers etc.)'.²⁸ The polis already makes a departure from the primitive commune in the separation of communal and private property and the associated emergence of the phenomenon of class, actively promoted by those Attic reformers who hoped to use it to offset the power of family and clan:

Hence the commune consisting of families initially organised in a warlike way — as a system of war and army, and this is one of the conditions of its being there

as proprietor. The concentration of residences in the town, basis of this bellicose organisation. The clan system in itself leads to higher and lower ancestral lineages, a distinction which is still further developed through intermixture with subjugated clans etc. Communal property — as state property, *ager publicus* — here separated from private property... the more the purely naturally arisen, spontaneous character of the clan has been broken by historic movement, migration, the more, further, the clan removes itself from its original seat and occupies alien ground hence enters into essentially new conditions of labour, and develops the energy of the individual more — its common character appearing, necessarily, more as a negative unity towards the outside — the more, therefore are the conditions given under which the individual can become a private proprietor of land and soil — of a particular plot — whose particular cultivation falls to him and his family. The commune — as state — is, on the one side, the relation of these free and equal private proprietors to one another, their bond against the outside, and is at the same time their safeguard. The commune here rests as much on the fact that its members consist of working landed proprietors, small-owning peasants, as the peasants' independence rests on their mutual relations as commune members, on protection of the *ager publicus* for communal needs and communal glory, etc. Membership in the commune remains the pre-supposition for the appropriation of land and soil, but, as a member of the commune, the individual is a private proprietor.²⁹

It is indeed the tension between the individual as private proprietor and communal requirements which lead to the decline of the polis. In terms reminiscent of the four moments of production and reproduction of the conditions of production, outlined in *The German Ideology*, Marx shows how production itself erodes the basis of communal society by sustaining an increase in population, the creation of new needs, wealth and so on.³⁰

After the city of Rome had been built and the surrounding countryside cultivated by its citizens, the conditions of the community were different from what they had been before. The aim of all these communities is survival; i.e. reproduction of the individuals who compose it as proprietors, i.e. in the same objective mode of existence as forms the relation among the member and at the same time therefore the commune itself. This

reproduction, however, is at the same time necessarily new production and destruction of the old form... Not only do the objective conditions change in the act of reproduction, e.g. the village becomes a town, the wilderness a cleared field etc., but the producers change too, in that they bring out new qualities in themselves, develop themselves in production, transform themselves, develop new powers and ideas, new modes of intercourse, new needs and new language... Thus the preservation of the old community includes the destruction of the conditions on which it rests, turns into its opposite.³¹

It is clear from Marx's frequent allusion to the immediacy and intimacy of social relations under the *Gemeinschaft*, compared with the fetishised relations of the *Gesellschaft*, that like Aristotle he believes that the affinal ties of primordial society have no substitute. In *Capital* volume III (part 2, p. 329) he refers to the destruction of the commune as 'first the tearing of the individuality loose from the originally not despotic claims... but rather satisfying and agreeable bonds of the group, of the primitive community — and therewith the onesided elaboration of individuality'.³²

Aristotle also related all questions of citizenship back to the commune (*koinonia*). The good citizen is distinguished, as other-regarding, from the good man, as self-regarding, because he promotes the good of the collectivity.³³ Aristotle concedes that society is essentially an association of property-owners 'a pact of mutual protection or an agreement to exchange goods and services'.³⁴ In admitting, moreover, that whenever the question of justice is raised it is always relevant to ask *cui bono?* — justice for whom? — and that under oligarchy justice means free and equal treatment of the wealthy, just as under democracy it means free and equal treatment for the poor, Aristotle was willing to admit what Plato was at such pains to deny, that the ruling class rules in its own interest.³⁵ But the state is nevertheless superior to clan society, Aristotle maintains, not because of the economic opportunities it opens up, which are in fact destructive of the community, but to the extent that it can furnish the material needs of the 'good life':

The state is intended to enable all, in their households and their kinships, to live well, meaning by that a full and satisfying life. This will not be attained unless these family-groups occupy one and the same territory and can intermarry. It is indeed on that account that we find in various cities associations formed of relatives by marriage, brotherhoods (*phratriai*), family reunions for sacrifices to the gods, and other ways of social intercourse. All these activities are an expression of affection, for it is our love of others that causes us to prefer life in a society; and they all contribute towards

that good life which is the purpose of the state.³⁶

The significance of citizenship, compared with membership by birthright in the community of family, tribe and clan, is that citizenship qualifies the individual by virtue of fitness to exercise power as well as judgement, to rule and be ruled. While the theoretical separation of political power, in the concept of citizenship, from the economic order of society introduced a mystification, as Marx spelled out, Aristotle was not naive about the relation between property and citizenship. In trying to locate the critical element to differentiate types of regime he declares:

The argument seems to show that the real criterion should be property, that it is a matter of accident whether those in power be few or many, the one in oligarchies, the other in democracies. It just happens that way because everywhere the rich are few and the poor are many... what differentiates oligarchy and democracy is wealth or lack of it. The essential point is that where the possession of political power is due to the possession of economic power or wealth, whether the number of persons be large or small, that is oligarchy, and when the unpropertied class have power, that is democracy... and these are the bases of their claim to a share in the *politeia*, property in the one case, free status in the other.³⁷

The concept of the 'political' as 'rule of the free', despite the economic realities governing civic life, did presage the possibility of individual transcendence of primordialism and the ability to create freely cultural forms expressive of the full range of human powers and potentialities, as Marx was quick to see. The comparison between the emancipated individual (although properly social and belonging to a higher order of community), and the individual in primordial society, was expressed in the comparison between the architect and the bee. The one lives in a world of social relationships informed by human needs and purposes; the other lives in a world created at the command of instinct.

In the *Ethnological Notebooks* Marx turned to the study of the specific historical processes by which the polis emerged from primordial society. Not surprisingly, he located the dynamic mechanism in property as the vehicle for communal and private interests. As these interests pulled apart, primordial institutions of *gens* and tribe become notional entities, public fictions to mask separate and antagonistic private interests.³⁸ Discussing the discontent caused by the fact that under Solon, and prior to Cleisthenes 'the poorer class would not be admitted either as a *gens* in a tribe or adopted into a *gens* in a tribe', Morgan had noted that

'although admitted to citizenship through the classes, they remained excluded from the traditional *gentes* and *phratries*' which constituted eligibility for political office. The growth of this excluded class; the immigration of industrious workers encouraged by Solon, so that members of different *gentes*, tribes and *phratries* were living side by side in the same town; competition between tribes and clans for common lands for religious purposes, etc, all contributed to the dissolution of Greek gentile society:

In the time of Solon lands and houses were owned by individuals severally, with the power of alienation of lands, but not of houses reserved to the *gens*. So it was ever more difficult to keep the members of a *gens* locally together, on account of the shifting relations of persons to land and of the creation of new property by its members in other localities. The unity of their social system was becoming unstable in place and in character.

On which Marx commented:

Aside from the locality: property difference within the same *gens* had transformed the unity of their interests into antagonisms of its members; in addition, beside land and cattle, money capital had become of decisive importance with the development of slavery!³⁹

Morgan summarised the state of economic and social development thus:

*By the time of Solon Athenians already a civilised people, had been so for two centuries; significant development of useful arts, commerce at sea became a national interest, advancement of agriculture and manufacture, commencement of written composition in verse; but its institutions of government still gentile, of the type of the Later Period of Barbarism.*⁴⁰

Marx excerpts the passages from Morgan which follow on the reorganisation of tribes by Cleisthenes which recognised the new economic reality whereby the 'township with its fixed property and its inhabitants for the time being yielded the element of permanence now wanting in the *gens*'.⁴¹ The reforms of Cleisthenes divided Attica into 'demes or townships (wards)', which were the foundations of local government and rights of citizenship. The demes were 'united in a larger geographical district,... called a local tribe — *phylon topikon*... the second member of the organic territorial series'. The 'third and last

member of the territorial series' was the Athenian state, constituted out of 10 local tribes, represented by Senate, ecclesia, Court of Areopagus, archons, judges, elected military and naval commanders'.⁴² Thus Morgan concludes 'the relations to gens or phratry ceased to govern the duties of an Athenian as a citizen. The coalescence of the people into bodies politic in territorial areas was now complete'.⁴³

To understand how Marx viewed the decline of the ancient polis and its loss, we turn back to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and his disquisition on democracy, where he has already in 1843 articulated the concept of the transparency of political relations in antiquity compared with the fetishism of relations under commodity production, so famous from *Capital*, and the notion of the modern state as a proto-religious sublimation of the realities of civil society, made famous in 'On the Jewish Question':

Political life in the modern sense is the Scholasticism of popular life... It is obvious that the political constitution as such is perfected for the first time when the private spheres have attained independent existence. Where commerce and property in land are not free, not yet autonomous, there is also not yet the political constitution... The abstraction of the modern state as such belongs only to modern times because the abstraction of private life belongs only to modern times. The abstraction of the political state is a modern product.⁴⁴

Marx refers to the political constitution of the modern state as 'the religious sphere, the sphere of popular life, the heaven of its universality in opposition to the earthly existence of its actuality'.⁴⁵ He contrasts this formalisation of the public/private dichotomy in the modern state with the situation in the classical polis and under the Asiatic commune:

...there is yet no political constitution in distinction from the actual material state or from the remaining content of popular life. The political state does not yet appear as the form of the material state. Either, as in Greece, the *res publica* was the real private concern, the real content of the citizen, and the private man was slave, that is, the political state was political was the true and sole content of the citizen's life and will; or, as in Asiatic despotism, the political state was nothing but the private will of a single individual, and the political state, like the

material state, was slave.⁴⁶

Constitutional devices cannot effect a restitution of the community that was lost with the decline of the polis and the rise of the modern state. Discussing the problem of political participation in the liberal-democratic state Marx notes that the dilemma posed by Hegel, whether 'civil society (the Many, the multitude) shares through deputies in deliberating and deciding on political matters of general concern or all as individuals do this' is a false one.⁴⁷ As he notes, the question posed this way is 'a question within the abstraction of the political state or within the abstract political state; it is an abstract political question'.⁴⁸ The restitution of political existence in the classical (democratic) sense cannot be achieved through representation by deputies, or even by the participation of all as individuals in the legislature, so long as the separation of civil society and the state remains a reality or, so long as economic appropriation divides society into owners and non-owners. As Marx points out:

There are two possibilities here: either the separation of the political state and civil society actually obtains, or civil society is actual political society. In the first case, it is impossible that all as individuals participate in the legislature, for the political state is an existent which is separated from civil society. On the one hand, civil society would abandon itself as such if all its members were legislators; on the other the political state which stands over against it can tolerate it only if it has a form suitable to the standards of the state. In other words, the participation of civil society in the political state through deputies is precisely the expression of their separation and merely dualistic unity.

Given the second case, i.e., that civil society is actual political society, it is nonsense to make a claim which has resulted precisely from a notion of the political state as an existent separated from civil society, from the theological notion of the political state. (In this situation legislative power altogether loses the meaning of representative power.) Here the legislature is a representation in the same sense in which every function is representative. For example, the shoemaker is my representative in so far as he fulfils a social need, just as every definite social activity, because it is a species-activity represents only the species; that is to say, it represents a determination of my own essence the way every man is representative of the other. Here, he is representative not by virtue of something other than himself which he represents, but by virtue of what he is

and does.⁴⁹

The dilemma of representation through deputies or by all as individuals mistakes the nature of the 'political' which is taken to be the sum of a series of discrete political acts, a voluntaristic conception which focuses on the legislature as the locus of popular participation. Such a view fails to see that 'participation in matters of general concern and participation in the state... are identical.'⁵⁰ Marx follows Aristotle in defining citizenship in the strict sense as 'participation in Judgement and Authority, that is holding office, legal, political, administrative', whether that be high office or merely as member of 'a panel of judges or of a citizen-assembly'.⁵¹ For this reason Marx insists:

It is a tautology to say that a member of the state, a part of the state, participates in the state, and that this participation can appear only as deliberation or decision, or related forms, and thus that every member of the state shares in deliberating and deciding (if these functions are taken to be the functions of actual participation in the state) the political matters of general concern... On the other hand, if we are talking about definite concerns, about single political acts, then it is again obvious that not all as individuals accomplish them. Otherwise, the individual would be the true society, and would make society superfluous.⁵²

Marx appeals against the radical individualism of those who would have all as individuals participate in the decision-making of the state. Such a view overlooks the corporate nature of society in which membership implies being 'an integral part'. In the society in which membership lives up to its promise, formal representation is redundant, for 'if they are an integral part of the state, then it is obvious that their social existence is already, their actual participation in it'.⁵³ Democracy of antiquity lived up to this promise, and for that reason relates to all other forms of constitution as genus to species.

The separation of civil society and the state, although sounding the death knell of ancient communal society did not, as we know, produce a situation without hope in Marx's view. In the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* he saw the vote and pressure for universal suffrage as symptomatic of the 'drive of civil society to transform itself into political society, or to make political society into actual society'.⁵⁴ For 'the vote is the immediate, the direct, the existing and not simply imagined relation of civil society to the political state'.⁵⁵ Political reformers have rightly seen that the critical issue is not a question of whether civil society should exercise legislative power through deputies or through all as

individuals. Rather it is a question of the extension and greatest possible universalisation of voting, or active as well as passive suffrage'.⁵⁶

In unrestricted suffrage, both active and passive, civil society has actually raised itself for the first time to an abstraction of itself, to political existence as its true universal and essential existence. But the full achievement of this abstraction is at once also the transcendence (*Aufhebung*) of the abstraction. In actually establishing its political existence as its true existence civil society has simultaneously established its civil existence in distinction from its political existence, as inessential. And with the one separated, the other, its opposite, falls. Within the abstract political state the reform of voting advances the dissolution (*Auflosung*) of this political state, but also the dissolution of civil society.⁵⁷

The continuities and discontinuities of the Marxian corpus are apparent in a comparison between this resolution of the problem of the modern state in the form of universal franchise suggested in the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and the resolution in the *Grundrisse*. There too Marx's optimism of a resolution of the public/private problem raised by the dichotomy of civil society and the state comes as rather a surprise. It is highly significant that Marx should see in the 'free and equal private proprietors' of the *polis*⁵⁸ ultimately responsible for its destruction as the pursuit of self-interest put unbearable strains on the community, a progressive force. Here we see Marx's preference for modernity, and his break with Aristotle. Maintaining, as Aristotle was probably more realistic than to claim, that in antiquity, 'wealth does not appear as the aim of production' he notes that:

although Cato may well investigate which manner of cultivating a field brings the greatest rewards, and Brutus may even lend out his money at the best rates of interest, the question is always which mode of property creates the best citizens. Wealth appears as an end in itself only among the few commercial peoples — monopolists of the carrying trade — who live in the pores of the ancient world, like the Jews in medieval society.⁵⁹

For this reason, Marx believes, 'individuals may appear great, but there can be no conception here of a free and full development either of the individual or of the society'. For 'what is wealth', he asks, 'when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away', but:

the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a predetermined yardstick?⁶⁰

This Marx concludes with characteristic ambivalence towards society of the past, 'is why the childish world of antiquity appears on one side as loftier. On the other side, it really is loftier in all matters where closed shapes, forms and given limits are sought for. It is satisfaction from a limited standpoint; while the modern gives no satisfaction; or where it appears satisfied with itself, it is vulgar'.

And this 'complete working-out of the human content', which 'appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an entirely external end' is perhaps why Marx in the *Ethnological Notebooks* refers to classical democracy as a subject of academic and historical interest only, believing as he undoubtedly did, that this political form belonged to a way of life irretrievably lost to modernity and reappearing, if at all, only with the spontaneously recreated forms of the socialist community of the future.

Footnotes

¹ Aristotle, *Politics I*, 1962 Penguin edn; 37: 'From all this it is clear that there is a difference between the rule of master over slave and political rule. All forms of rule are not the same, though some say that they are. Rule over free men is by nature different from rule over slaves; rule in a household is monarchical, since every house has one ruler; the government of the state is rule over free and equal persons'.

² Marx's commentary on Morgan, *Ethnological Notebooks* (Assen, Van Gorcum, 1974) p. 196; *Capital*, vol. 1, Moscow, Progress, n.d., 309; *Grundrisse*, Nicolaus edn., 84; Article on 'Civic Militia Bill', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, July 20-23, 1848, M.E.C.W. vii, 264.

³ Marx, *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, ed. Joseph O'Malley, Cambridge University Press, 1970, 29. All citations are to this edition.

⁴ Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*, chs. 1-23. Marx, *Ethnological Notebooks*, 196-241, 404-14.

⁵ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 204-10.

⁶ Aristotle, *Politics I*, viii. Marx in his commentaries on Aristotle's economic theory of *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 5 and *Politics I*, 8-10 applies to *oikonomia* the formula C—M—C (in the *Grundrisse* C—M—M—C); and to *chrematistike*, the formula M—

C—M¹ (in the *Grundrisse* M—C—C—M) *Capital*, vol. 1, 150-51, 162; *Grundrisse*, 203.

⁷ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 210. As Krader points out, Morgan did not cite Aristotle in this connection and Marx introduces this material contrary to Morgan in fact. Lawrence Krader, 'The Works of Marx and Engels in Ethnology Compared', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 18, 1973, 254.

⁸ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 292.

⁹ *ibid.*, 294.

¹⁰ *Grundrisse*, 540.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 485. Marx's reference to the commune as geared to the production of use values follows Aristotle who distinguishes *oikonomia* as the production of use values for the community from *chrematistike* as the production of exchange values. *Politics*, I, 9-10, 1962, Penguin edn., 40-47.

¹² *Grundrisse*, 485-86.

¹³ Compare Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, Part II, London, Dent, 1952, 192; who maintains that 'the first man who... enclosed a piece of land... saying "this is mine"... was the real founder of civil society'.

¹⁴ *Grundrisse*, 486.

¹⁵ In the *Grundrisse*, 472, Marx refers to communality as *Gemeinschaftlichkeit*. See *Ethnological Notebooks* and Introduction by Lawrence Krader, esp. 21, 49ff., 64, 73, on *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, *societas/civitas*, *status/contractus* distinctions. See also Karl Polanyi, 'Aristotle Discovers the Economy', 69-71 in *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, ed., Polanyi and H.W. Pearson, Glencoe, Ill. 1957, on these distinctions.

¹⁶ *Capital*, vol. 1, 64.

¹⁷ *Capital*, 64n.

¹⁸ *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, 30.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *Grundrisse*, 474-76.

²² *ibid.*, 484.

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*, 478.

²⁶ *ibid.*, 479.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 483.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 472.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 474-75.

³⁰ *The German Ideology*, M.E.C.W. vol. 5, 41-2. Marx notes that changes in primordial forms accompany this expansion and transformation of needs, technological and economic innovations. Thus the primitive division of labour between the sexes lays the basis for the division and specialisation of labour in society at large, the separation of town and country and the destruction of clan-based *oikos* dominated society.

³¹ *Grundrisse*, 493-94.

³² *Capital*, Vol. 3, Part 2, 329.

³³ *Politics*, bk III, ch. 4, Penguin edn., 1962, 106-10.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 119.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 118. Aristotle notes: 'For all aim at justice of some kind, but they do not proceed beyond a certain point and are not referring to the whole of absolute justice when they speak of it. Thus it appears that the just is equal, and so it is, but not for all persons, only for those that are equal... we make bad mistakes if we neglect this "for whom" when we are deciding what is just.'

³⁶ *ibid.*, 120-21.

³⁷ *ibid.*, bk III, ch. 8, 117.

³⁸ *Ethnological Notebooks*, Commentaries on Morgan, 78-80 and Maine, 175-78. See also Krader introduction, 37.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 213. Marx's insertion translated by Krader, introduction, 37. See Lewis H.

Morgan, *Ancient Society or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Co. 1877, 276.

⁴⁰ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 214; Morgan, 277.

⁴¹ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 213-14; Morgan, 276.

⁴² *Ethnological Notebooks*, 214; Morgan, 278-79.

⁴³ *Ethnological Notebooks*, 215; Morgan, 279-80.

⁴⁴ *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, 32.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 32-3.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 117.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 118.

⁵¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, III, 1, 102.

⁵² *Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'*, 118.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Grundrisse*, 474-75.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, 487.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 488.

INTERPRETATIONS OF, AND INTERPRETATIONS IN PHILOSOPHY

Gyorgy Markus

The hermeneutics of Gadamer is often charged, as far as its consequences and implications for a theory of interpretation in the narrower sense are concerned, with a relapse into the morass of an unchecked subjectivism. By rejecting in principle the question about the 'correct' interpretation as a misconceived and objectifying methodological ideal, by replacing the problem of how to understand 'better', with that of why do we understand the same texts and the same manifestations of cultural life always differently, it represents — it is argued — a self-defeating relativism. Gadamer himself rejects these criticisms as a misunderstanding of the very task of a philosophical hermeneutics, and of the decidedly anti-subjectivist intentions and implications of his theory. This latter deals with what is common (in the sense of their conditions of possibility) to all modes and ways of understanding, with what happens to, and with us when we understand, disclosing that understanding is not simply one of the possible cognitive relations of an epistemic subject to some kinds of objects, but the basic mode of our finite and temporal existence encompassing the whole of our world experience. Such a philosophical investigation certainly has its consequences for a theory and methodology of interpretation proper, since interpretation is the explicit, conscious and self-reflective understanding of tradition under conditions when it became problematic or endangered. But it in no way implies the impossibility of a normatively oriented methodology of interpretation which is concerned with those rules that — at the present level of learning — should secure the reliability or scientificity of the latter.

In this paper I would like to suggest that this happy compromise between the philosophical elucidation of an underlying, fundamental facticity and the secondary, methodological problem of establishing its norms (valid at least for the present) cannot be upheld and in fact is not upheld by Gadamer himself. But in opposition to critics who find in his theory a limitless relativism, the danger of an 'everything goes', I am troubled by the fact that his philosophy at least at some points seems to posit a historically and culturally specific and limited model of interpretation as its universally valid form, while at the same time suppresses —