

Debating Realism(s) : Marxism and Nyaya-Vaisesika

Manindra Nath Thakur
University of Delhi
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Abstract

I see Critical Realism as a philosophical trend that goes beyond modernism and postmodernism. It has tremendous potential to give new meaning to Marxism. Critical Realism makes it theoretically possible to establish a process of negotiation between Marxism and other non-western philosophical traditions. In this context it seems to be important to explore the possibility of negotiation between Marxism, Critical Realism and Nyaya-Vaisesika philosophy, a prominent school of Indian philosophy. The points of comparison are epistemology, ontology, and criteria of knowledge. NV seems to have potential to contribute significantly to both Critical Realism and Marxism.

Introduction

I will argue in this paper that Marx has provided an adequate framework for developing a universal philosophy of liberation based on democratic negotiations among different philosophical traditions. Critical realist interpretation of Marx creates space for such democratic negotiations. As these philosophical traditions are deeply rooted in the social and geographical context in which they have emerged, such a negotiation enhances the possibilities of Marx's ideas being more acceptable. I would like to examine the case of Nyaya-Vaisesika(NV) philosophy which is one of the important stream of Indian philosophy. Idea is to compare Marx's realism with that of NV's realism and to explore the possibilities of democratic negotiation between the two philosophies.

I think this project becomes particularly important with the collapse of Communist political systems. The collapse has created several theoretical and ideological problems for the socialist movements. A process of rethinking Marxism that began in early 1960s particularly with Althusser, Habermas and Cohen is gaining new impetus. The theoretical crisis that Marxism is facing due to the collapse of dominant Soviet interpretation has in fact provided a creative space for rethinking Marxism in more than one way. I think it is possible to enrich Marx's theoretical tools by engaging with different other than European philosophical traditions. It is in this context, I would like to place this paper. My assertion here is that NV realism has potential to offer several significant ontological and epistemological formulations worth considering for rethinking Marxism. Since my larger project is to explore the implications of such an exercise for the philosophy of social science, I would like to consider this paper as work in progress.

Marx and Democratic Negotiation among Philosophical Traditions

What should be our attitude towards different philosophical traditions available in different geographical locations and cultural contexts? The standard European answer to this question has been that philosophy has originated in the Greek society; it is a unique

contribution of the Greeks to the humanity. Other philosophical traditions are considered as insignificant and unimportant as far as serious philosophical questions are concerned. Many great Western philosophers and scholars shared this idea. For instance, Hegel was one of the most prominent advocates of the Greek origin of philosophy. He considered philosophy as development of the consciousness of freedom and this he argues was a Greek invention that reached its apex in the modern Germanic nation. Consequently, he never took the contemporary German scholars of Indian philosophy seriously.¹ Hegel was aware of the works of Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837) related to Indian philosophy and he conceded that Indian thought was abstract and had developed its own formal logic. However, he always believed that India represents the 'childhood' of humanity with nothing of significance for the modern philosophy. This became the most accepted position among the Western scholars like Hursel, Locke and others.

Generally, it seems Marx accepted this trend of rejecting the non-European philosophical traditions. However, a close examination of Marx's treatment of German, French and English philosophical traditions gives a clue in this context. In order to carve out his own philosophical framework Marx enters in democratic negotiation with the philosophical traditions available to him as part of the collective consciousness of his social context. One such example is the way Marx arrived on his understanding of dialectics and materialism.

Let me have a close look on the way Marx appropriated these two concepts from the history of ideas of western philosophical tradition. I will make this point without going into much detail of history of the idea of the dialectics.² In fact Marx critically examined the concept of dialectics available in Greek and German philosophical traditions.³ He appropriated different dimensions of his own concept of dialectics from these traditions. I will only show how he could do this.

In the western philosophical tradition, history of the idea of dialectics can be traced from Greek philosophy. Marx was greatly influenced by Greek thinkers for two reasons. First, they had a holistic view of nature, as they did not dissect and analyse nature. In fact, they were not advanced enough to do that. They could easily contemplate the interconnectedness of the natural phenomena. Second, Greek philosophy contained within itself seeds of many contemporary ideas that Marx was interested in.

Marx appropriated the concept of dialectics from Ionian and Eliatic schools. These are two important trends in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy in its earliest phase is naturalistic; its attention is directed towards nature. It is hylozistic, conceives nature as animated or alive; ontological, it inquires into the essence of things; monistic, it seeks to explain every phenomenon by means of a single principle; dogmatic, it presupposes the competence of human mind to solve the world problems. The central problems these philosophers faced were that of change. Does change take place? What is the nature of process by which the basic substance or substances change into familiar objects of senses? First question was addressed by Eliatic school, in which Heraclitus argued that nature is always in flux. It is from Heraclitus that Marx appropriated the concept of contradiction as an element of dialectics. There are several examples of use of concept of

contradiction in Marx and Engels. For example, Engels writes in *Review of A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

With this method we begin with the first and simplest relation which is historically, actually available, thus in this context with the first economic relation to be found. We analyze this relation. The fact that it is it is *relation* already implies that it has two aspects which are *related to each other*. Each of these aspects is examined separately; this reveals the nature of their mutual behaviour, their reciprocal action. Contradictions will emerge demanding a solution We shall trace the mode of this solution and find that it has been effected by establishing a new relation, whose two contradictory aspects we shall then have to set forth, and so on.⁴

Engels acknowledges Heraclitus' influence in more clear words in *Anti-Duhring*. He writes:

When we consider and reflect upon nature at large or the history of mankind or our own intellectual activity, at first we see the picture of an endless enlightenment of relations and reactions, in which nothing remains what, where and as it was, but everything moves, changes, comes into being and passes away. This primitive, naïve but intrinsically correct conception of the world is that of ancient Greek philosophy, and was first clearly formulated by Heraclitus: everything is and is not, for everything is fluid, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away.⁵

There are several other examples in their writings, where one can see the influence of the concept of contradiction taken from Heraclitus. In fact, he has been one of the most important thinkers on dialectics.

Another impact of Greek thinkers on Marx is reflected in the concept of 'dialectical argument'. Dialectics was conceived in this form by Socrates (430-320 BC). He defended the possibilities of knowledge against the assault of scepticism, and showed how truth might be reached with the help of logical method. For him, dialectics was a mode of argument. Socrates' central concern was to challenge the sophists who not only undermined but also threatened the foundation of morality and state. Dialectics evolved in Socrates in the form of cross-examination. Socrates, in discussing a subject, generally set out from the popular and hastily formulated opinions. He pretended as knowing even less than the other participants involved in the discussion. This is called Socratic irony. In the process of discussion, he used to taste the opinions with illustrations taken from everyday life showing the weaknesses of the argument. The participants were more or less convinced that the subject under discussion needed much modification in that direction. The participants very soon became convinced of the mastery of Socrates on the subject.

It is argued that, perhaps, Socratic concept of 'dialectical argument' has been extended by Marx to understand class struggle.⁶ The argument behind working class claim for

establishing a classless and just society is similar to Socratic irony. Because, there is claim that revolution has positive effect not only for working classes but also for the bourgeoisie, as they equally suffer alienation and dehumanizing conditions of living.

Marx was also influenced by Plato's concept of dialectics. Plato was a great Greek thinker who developed philosophy in a more comprehensive way. His concerns were all encompassing. He constructed rational theories of knowledge (logic), conduct (ethics), and the state (politics). He also worked out a comprehensive system of speculative thought (metaphysics and speculated the universe in terms of mind or reason).

Plato is the only thinker who consolidated ideas of Socrates into a more comprehensive and integrated system of thought. It was done along the lines indicated by philosophical method and humanistic insights of Socrates. Plato tried to address almost all the questions i.e., the ultimate nature of being, the human knowledge, the human conduct, human institutions, and the meaning of reality. Plato used the Socratic method, art of arriving at the truth in the form of dialogue, with wonderful artistic effect. He also formulated a theory of method called dialectic or logic in which he described the art of forming or combining concepts. One can easily see the beginning of the theory of knowledge and of formal logic in his logical operations through which he arrives at the truth. His central concern is to understand reality in its completeness.

In fact, Plato's dialectical method was a synthesis of many schools of thought. This was an art of constructing a better method, which Marx also adopted. Plato agreed with the Eliatic School that the real world is unchangeable but substitutes for Permenide's unchanging being by his world of ideas. With Heraclitus he agreed that the world is in constant change but again he restricted it to the world of eternal ideas. Like Atomists he argues that the reality is manifold but replaces the plurality of atoms with the plurality of ideas. He agrees with the sophists that the sense perception does not reveal the true reality of things but gives us merely appearance. From Socrates he learnt that genuine knowledge is only possible by concepts.

Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato, these Greek philosophers provided Marx good part of his understanding of dialectics. However, he inherited dialectics in most significant way from Hegel. Hegel's work on dialectics is most comprehensive, as Engels' rightly comments. It is a known fact, that Marx was greatly influenced by Hegel. He appropriated much of dialectics available in Greek and German philosophical tradition through Hegel. Marx writes:

I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which dialectics suffer in Hegel's hand by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him, it is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational Kernel within the mystical shell.⁷

What is the rational 'Kernel of the mystical shell'? There have been serious disagreements among the scholars on what is the rational kernel. While, appropriating the concept of dialectics from Hegel, Marx had double task. On the one hand, they had to rescue the dialectics from the idealism of Hegel and on the other hand, they had to defend Hegel from the attacks of post-Hegelians. Dialectics was being mystified by Hegel's followers. The official Hegelian school, Engels comments, was busy in applying the simple devices of Hegel's dialectics to anything and everything in most 'ridiculous incompetence'. These Hegelians knew nothing but could write about everything. This mystified form of Hegelianism was fashionable in Germany because 'it seemed to transfigure and glorify the existing state of things.'⁸ This type of Hegelianism could not sustain the attack that came from Feuerbach and Engels says that 'Hegelianism gradually died away, and it seemed that science was once more dominated by antiquated metaphysics with its rigid categories.'⁹ Marx appropriated the rational form of dialectics from Hegel. In its rational form it was critical and revolutionary, because it included 'in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of the state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence...'. Even the rational form of dialectics of Hegel, Engels points out, was suffering essentially an idealist. Hegel's method took as its points of departure, pure thought. In order to discover the rational Kernel, it was essential to carry a thorough critique of the Hegelian method.

Therefore, the appropriation of the concept of dialectics by Marx and Engels is critical as it involves double task: a) to rescue the dialectics from 'idealism' of Hegel and b) to defend Hegel from the attacks of the post-Hegelians. Engels appreciated Hegel for providing a concept of the world, natural, historical, intellectual was in a process, i.e., as in constant motion change, transformation, development. At the same time Hegel was also appreciated for his attempt to trace out the internal connections that made a continuous whole of all this movement and development.¹⁰ According to Engels, Hegel was the first to try to demonstrate that there was an evolution, an intrinsic coherence in history.¹¹ His greatest achievement was that he took up dialectics as the highest form of reasoning after Greek thinkers.¹²

Having appreciated Hegel for his understanding of dialectics as a process and reasoning, Marx and Engels also gave a critique in order to appropriate the rational kernel of his dialectics. Marx wrote:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which under the name of 'the idea', he even transforms into an independent subject, is the deminurcos of the real world, and the real world is only external, phenomenal form of 'the idea'. With me, on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.¹³

Though Marx appreciated Hegel's debt to his thought, yet he differentiated his own idea of dialectics from that of Hegel. He argued that with Hegel it was standing on his head, it needed to be turned right side up again, in order to discover the 'rational kernel within the mystical shell'.¹⁴

A similar case of critical appropriation of the concept of materialism from French and English philosophical tradition can be presented here. This is very clearly done in *The Holy Family* by Marx and Engels. They trace the history of materialism from Descartes to Locke and show that there is a natural affinity between materialism and socialism. They write:

...How necessary materialism is connected with communism and socialism. If man draws all his knowledge, sensation etc., from the world of the senses and the experiences gained in it, then what has to be done is to arrange the empirical world in such a way that man experiences and becomes accustomed to what is truly human in it and that he becomes aware of himself as man. If correctly understood, interest is the principle of all morality, man's private interest of humanity.... If man is shaped by his environment, his environment must be made human....¹⁵

This is how Marx appropriates materialism from the British and French traditions of philosophy. As *The Holy Family* (1844) was written just before his critique of Feuerbach (1845), they should be read together. He begins with an appreciation of French mechanical tradition but later becomes a critic of it. This is how he critically appreciates materialism. The best example of the way Marx enters in democratic negotiations with different philosophical traditions can be found in the process of examining the history of materialism. Marx and Engels write:

The difference between French and English materialism reflects the difference between the two nations. The French imparted the materialism wit, flesh and blood, and eloquence. They gave it the temperament and grace that it lacked. They civilised it.¹⁶

This is how Marx examined historical evolution of the concepts he decided to appropriate from different philosophical traditions and used them with specific connotations in his own philosophical framework.

I would like to stress on the point that Marx critically appreciated the concepts like dialectics from the Greek and German traditions and materialism from English and French traditions to formulate his own concept of dialectical materialism. This process of appropriation itself is quite important. Two conclusions can be drawn from this. One, that since Marx was aware of these two philosophical traditions, where he could find the concept of dialectics, he leaves scope for further development of the concept by similar process of critical appropriation in case of encounter with any other philosophical tradition. In that case, his concept of dialectics always contains within itself the possibilities of further accommodation. This is what Engels understands clearly in context of science, when he says that the advances of theoretical natural science may possibly make his work to a great extent or even altogether superfluous.¹⁷

Therefore, I would like to make a point that it is very much within Marxist framework to continue the process of democratic negotiation with different philosophical traditions available in different geographical and social context. I think this point is important to be made because Marxist scholars even in India would perhaps object to any possible negotiation with Indian philosophy. At best, they have explored the material roots of different Indian philosophical traditions. I think, there is a need to encounter these philosophies purely at the level of their arguments. This is what I would like to do in this paper while discussing Marxism and Nyaya Vaisesika.

Critical Realist Reading of Marx

How to read Marx? There are several schools attempting to read Marx in one way or other. Answer to this question is crucial in order to make sense of Marx in the contemporary world. Exponents of Orthodox Marxism read Marx as a positivist social scientist. It is argued that Marx was attempting to develop a science of society, as Newton had developed the science of nature. Marx's achievements were discovery of science of history that was 'historical materialism' and principles of scientific socialism as opposed to utopian socialism. This reading of Marx could only produce one-dimensional Marxism, which was deterministic. It failed to see the complexity of society and the limitations of epistemology of natural science in understanding society. It failed also to understand that laws of society could not be similar to the laws of nature. At the same time, in case of society, subject is also part of the object and therefore, influenced the social reality. Failure to understand this complexity led these exponents to believe that Marx has discovered the laws of society, as Newton has discovered the laws of motion, and they are universal and beyond any change irrespective of the change in time and space. Such a reading of Marx is very limited in scope. It does a selective reading of Marx. Several grey areas of theory are ignored, such as religion, nationalism etc. It does not leave any scope for appropriation of developments in science, social science and related disciplines.

There has been a general dissatisfaction from such reading of Marx. Particularly, since 1960s, several attempts have been made to read Marx differently.¹⁸ For instance, Althusser, Habermas, and Cohen have suggested different readings based on new set of assumptions. Althusser suggests a 'symptomatic reading'¹⁹ of Marx, that can explain meanings of Marx's writings based on the 'problematic' he takes up to handle. Althusser wants to get rid of naturalist positivism of Orthodox Marxist reading, but falls into structuralist positivism. Althusser talks about the objectivity of the structural logic and does not pay sufficient attention to the role of the agency. The agency is subordinated to the structure and the claim of objectivity turns into positivism.

Habermas, I think, rejects Orthodox Marxist reading and suggests a reading in the light of developments in the disciplines like Psychology and Linguistic Philosophy. In fact, he reconstructs Stalinism instead of Marxism. Therefore, he also fails to read Marx's explorations in several areas apart from the Capitalist political economy.

Cohen, representative of Analytical Marxism, has suggested that Marx's arguments can be defended if they are taken as functional explanations. He argues that functional explanation, as an intellectual device is indispensable to historical materialism. He suggests in *The Preface to the Critique of Political Economy* that Marx has used a number of explanatory expressions. For example, relations of production *correspond* to productive forces; the legal and political superstructure *rises* on the real foundations; the social, political, and intellectual life process is *conditioned* by the mode of production and material life; consciousness is *determined* by social being.²⁰ Cohen suggests that 'Marx distinguishes two items, the second of which he asserts to be in some way explanatory of the first.' These are functional explanations in the sense that 'the character of what is explained is determined by its effect on what explains it'. For instance, take Marx's statement that structure corresponds to the achieved level of the productive forces. By Cohen's logic, it means 'the structure provides maximum scope for the fruitful use and development of the forces, and obtains because it provides such scope'. Similarly, to say that being determines consciousness means, that the character of the ideas of a society has to be explained by their natural tendency to sustain the structure of economic roles called for by the productive forces.²¹

There are several problems with Cohen's suggestion that we read Marx's explanations as functional. Instead of going into that I would like to argue that Cohen in fact, defends Marx's positivist interpretation without the positivist model of science and introduces logical positivism in Marxism. This is what Cohen inherits from the analytical philosophy tradition. Cohen's argument is further advanced by John Elster and Roemer and developed into Rational Choice Marxism by adapting Marxism to assumptions of neo-classical economics. RCM argues that Marx's arguments and theoretical formulations are incoherent and scattered. One has to put them together and reconstruct a theory by weighing various theoretical statements and formulations against each other. In this way, logically coherent formulations can be derived. RCM inherits logical positivism from Cohen and reads Marx only in that light. In addition, Cohen and others have no concept of praxis, as Marx always believed theories are products of practice, also influence practice and finally are confirmed by practice.

I think, Marx conceived reality as 'complex' totality constituted of integrated parts in dynamic relationship. The idea of reality as a complex totality is very crucial. Development of modern science, particularly, Chaos theory, tells us that even in natural science positivist notion of Newtonian model is no more valid. In fact, it is not possible to talk about deterministic causal laws any more in nature. There are several phenomena in nature, which defy any simplistic causal laws. One can at best talk in terms of possibilities.

In the above context, Roy Bhaskar's has made a significant contribution. His concepts of multilayered ontology and relative epistemology can help us in making sense of Marx better. He argues that reality is multilayered and each layer has its own specificity. There are a possible relative epistemologies according to the specificity of each layers of

ontology. We can talk in relatively more positivist terms about some layers of reality. However, there are also other layers of reality where it is impossible to talk in similar terms. Therefore, the concept of 'complex totality' means that there are layers of ordered reality and chaotic reality and all layers of reality are in between the two. As Marx's object of study is society, which is not an ordered layer like that of nature, there is no question of possibilities of positivism. Also in society, as reality has several layers from economy to consciousness, from relatively ordered layer to relatively chaotic layer. This is why Marx says that regarding economy, one may talk with the precision of natural science²². When he comes to consciousness, he does not attempt to talk in similar terms.

This 'complex totality' has parts and they are interrelated by dynamic relationship. Their dynamics determines the nature of 'complex totality' and that of the parts. In society, this is the generative mechanism, which causes events and actions. Marx's project is scientific in the sense that it tries to understand this generative mechanism and with this, it tries to explain the events and actions. He develops a science for this purpose that does not take fact and value as separate things but as part of different layers of reality rooted in society and through which one can discover generative mechanism, but not always, because there may be vast difference between appearance and reality. In case appearance and reality are the same, it is easy to discover the generative mechanisms behind the appearance with the help of facts. If they are different, it is difficult to discover the generative mechanism merely. He uses dialectics that tells him about the relationship between different layers of reality, different parts of the same layer and about their dynamic relationship.

Now, if Marx is read with this assumption in mind, one would not search for positive laws of society in Marx. At times when Marx deals with relatively closed system or relatively ordered layer of reality, it might seem as if he is giving a positivist theoretical statement. I think, such statements must be read with caution because these are statements regarding social reality, which is overall a relatively open system, or relatively chaotic layer of the reality. At times, Marx has limited his analysis to one layer of reality and made passing reference to other layers. Here, I think, lies the scope of expanding Marx's insights. This is what one can see in Marx's *Capital* (volume I). He is dealing with capitalism without forgetting to give hints towards religion, state etc. Let us pause and consider other methods of reading Marx from this point of view. Problem with Orthodox Marxism is that it uses Marx's epistemology, which he formulated to understand one layer, to all the other layers of reality. This leads the Orthodox Marxism to reductionism. Althusser also commits the same mistake. His understanding of interplay of structures as generative mechanism of social reality has some validity. However, he takes the argument too far to explain anything and everything in society with this. Habermas does suggest that Marxism should appropriate developments in human knowledge. He does not have this concept of multi-layered ontology and relative epistemology. He even forgoes Marx's gains related to relatively closed system of political economy by expanding epistemology of human psychology and language, adequate to understand one layer of reality, to the other layers.

Coming back to the discussion on reading Marx with non-positivist assumption, I would like to consider the scattered and at times seemingly contradictory statements regarding some phenomena in Marx's writings. I think, this reflects two things. One, that Marx is dealing with a complex reality having several dimensions and multiple appearances. At times, he talks about one or the other. These seemingly contradictory statements are in fact, related to different dimensions and different forms of reality. Instead of being contradictory, they may be mutually complementary. His comments on phenomena such as religion are scattered. When he deals with one layer of ontology, he keeps on connecting it with other layers too and therefore, we find such scattered materials. This does not mean that he has not considered them seriously. Implication of this argument for reading Marx is that his statements should be brought together and put in one overarching framework. Analytical and Rational Choice Marxists also suggest this. The problem lies with their test of validity of the statements. They think that validity depends on logical coherence. Marx would think that validity depends on practice. As Marx explains in the second and eighth thesis on Feuerbach, "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, ...in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which isolates itself from practice is a purely scholastic question."²³ Similarly, he says, "Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which misleads theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."²⁴ Therefore, validity of the theory should be tested in its capacity to explain the reality. This is not to undermine the importance of logical coherence but to place it in correct perspective.

To sum up, I have argued that an alternative reading of Marx is possible on the basis of assumption that Marx's project is to explore the reality which is a complex totality constituted of interrelated parts in dynamic relationship. Such a project is scientific in the sense that he wants to discover the generative mechanism of the social reality, which generates a variety of complex appearances. Therefore, Marx's writings should be read to understand his journey into this difficult search for the knowledge of this complex social reality. His theoretical statements are not positivist, law like statements. They are ²⁵accommodative, unfinished, and expandable. This is particularly true in the case of his engagement with relatively open systems. Scattered statements may be collected together to give us a more coherent understanding of multidimensional and complex phenomena.

Marxism and Nyaya-Vaisesika²⁶

If Marx is read in above mentioned way some crucial concepts are opened for further explorations. His concept of ontology and epistemology becomes open ended in the sense of being crucial issues around which the process of democratic negotiation of among philosophies might revolve. Marx as a realist believes that reality exists beyond, out side the subject. The subject tries to make sense of the reality in the context of collective consciousness in the form of knowledge. According to orthodox understanding of Marx, he gives more importance to the material reality and therefore he writes, 'being determines consciousness'. Mind is not considered to the part of reality and consciousness is considered as dependent on material reality and insignificant. However, critical realist

reading differs and argues that Marx has a concept of multi-layered ontology and relative epistemology. Mind is a part of reality but does exist at different layer than the material reality.

Nyaya-Vaishika's concept of ontology and epistemology seems to be similar to that of Marx. In fact, in some senses NV explores the concept in more detail. NV argues that the world is made up of variety of distinguishable particulars. The basic concern of this philosophy is to search for the primary categories of what is real. It accepts that what ever becomes subject to our knowledge is real. According to NV the basic substance of reality is padartha. The idea is that every word exists to connote a real thing. This the concept opposed to what Derrida has argued that words have meaning in the context of discourses. NV further divides padartha in eight categories: dravya(substance), Guna (quality), karman(action/ motion), Samanya(universal), visesa (particular), samavayaya (relation of inherence) and abhav (absence)

These five material substances are considered to be having special qualities (vises guna) of their own that distinguish them from each other. Earth has colour, taste, and touch; water has colour, taste, and touch and fluidity; Fire has colour and touch, and air has only touch. Different combinations of these dravyas come together to constitute of variety of material objects.

Space is a substance that allows object to move freely and gives meaning to the locations near and far. Time is known through our experience of different temporal modes. It allows us to make sense of all temporal categories. Time and space has been considered as very crucial part of the Marxist theory. But other two non-material categories are quite debatable. Self and manas. Though Marx has given sufficient emphasis on these categories of real world, at least if read Marx with the help of critical realism, they have been ignored significantly by the different Marxist thinkers. Let me explore the possibilities in these two categories of the real to argue that they are very crucial to our understanding of the reality in its all dimensions.

In NV self is considered to be immaterial, eternal and all pervading substance. There is a plurality of individual souls and their existence can be inferred from the quality of consciousness. The atman also posses secondary qualities such as desire, aversion, pleasure and pain. All these qualities are non-material, but very crucial for understanding the nature of the self. NV considers atman different from the body and believes atman being as real as the body. Atman is also differentiated from consciousness, sensations and mind. According to NV consciousness is not an essential attribute of the self, it is only a contingent quality of the self-deriving from its association with the material world. Therefore, liberation of atman means liberation from consciousness, pain, pleasure, desire, aversion, etc. This is the stage of moksha or kaivalya as also explained by other Indian philosophical traditions.

I think, to self in the category of real is very crucial. In fact Marx's concept of real constitutes of man, nature, society and their relationship. The concept of man (am using man just for convenience being fully aware of it limitations in terms of gender neutrality)

in Marx does have a concept self-inherent in it, particularly when he talks of alienation. However, this has remained a neglected aspect of Marx's thinking. There has been a general tendency, particularly in Indian Marxists to reject such concepts as being religious and opium. Thinkers like Althusser even went to the extent of arguing that it was early Marx, yet to achieve the epistemological break to overcome these Hegelian residues. Bhaskar's concept of multilayered ontology allows us to capture this aspect of Marx's thinking as it explores different dimensions of the human existence and considers all of them as part of the real. Bhaskar considers individual's self as part of the complex reality yet retaining its visesa qualities. If we can think to make this concept of self as real an integral component of overall project of Marx's understanding of society, it would yield better results in terms of providing explanations for phenomena like religion, culture and human psyche.

The last substance is manas or mind. I should start my discussion on mind with a statement by a friend of mine who was a Marxist involved in arms struggle and later on became a Professor of Sociology and considers himself as non-Marxist. He was ill and hospitalised quite for sometime. I inquired about the diagnosis. He replied, 'there is a problem with my mind and the doctors are treating my brain'. I think this a very crucial difference he has brought out of which he was not conscious of when he was a Marxist. Brain is material substance in NV terms made of a particular combination of five material substances. Whereas mind is a non-material substance existence of which can only be inferred. To be more specific, according to Vaisesika 'the mind can not be directly perceived but its existence must be inferred in order to explain the apprehension of sensory information from the sense organs and account for the internal perception of the self and a whole host of effective and mental states.'²⁷

What are the implications of considering mind as part of the real? Mind or manas does not produce new padartha but gets involve in its production. It has significant impact on the material world. The idea of making mind as part of the real actually can help in solving many problem created by mind-body dichotomy in philosophy. For instances, within Marxism there is debate over consciousness being false. Marx's statement that 'being determines consciousness' has been interpreted as being is the base and consciousness is super structure. Change in being will bring home automatic changes in the consciousness and therefore, consciousness has no autonomy and some time it is false. If mind were considered as part of the real it would be possible to argue that no consciousness is false as it is product of the interaction between our mind and other substances. Of course, there can be consciousness of different levels depending on the deepening interaction and further explorations of different ontological layers of the real. I think such a formulation has possibilities of expanding Marx's explanatory horizons. It would be possible to understand phenomena like religion, culture, human interaction, and psychology better.

I would like to discuss two more categories of substance: samanya (universal) and visesa (particular). NV believes in the idea that every word connotes a real thing, either material, non material or relational. There are several worlds denoting universal categories like horse, cow etc. What constitutes these universal categories? How real are

these universal categories? This issue has been discussed in most of the philosophical traditions. For instance, Plato considers only universal as real and existing at the level of idea. For him particulars are manifestations of the universals and former is more real than later. Buddhists rejects the status of the universal as real. They argue that 'universals are only mentally imputed categories. Universal are not intrinsic properties of entities but, in contrast, conceptual constructs deriving their validity from conventional acceptance and past usage'.²⁸

NV's position rejects both Platonic and Buddhist concept of universal. It proposes a staunch realism. It considers universals and particulars as differentiated and of equal ontological status. It argues that there are common characteristics and they get reflected in particular examples. For instance, the class term 'horse' having some specific characteristics is distinguished from a particular horse, in which these qualities are of course available. According to NV universal is as real as particular. The universal is not material but like time, space, self and mind it is also revealed to us through perception and our experience. NV accepts the Platonic concept of universal being real and Buddhist concept of particular being real. The universal exists without being dependent on the particular. However it only exists in a visible form in particulars. Matilal explains:

Nyaya-Vaisesika universals exist nowhere but in this world of ours, and particulars do not 'copy' them but manifest them, or allow the universals to reside in them. We can say, in accordance with Nyaya, that the particular provide a 'home' for the universal. The only mystery in this is that when the 'home' is destroyed, the universal rendered homeless, but it is not destroyed thereby! It maintains a 'homeless', i.e. unmanifest existence. It is spatially locatable and observable, provided the relevant particular is observable.²⁹

Matilal makes it clear that in NV system universals are not present in concrete form separately but always present in the existence of the particular.

According to NV every substance has its own particularity (visesa) by which they are distinguished from each other. For instance, all souls are characterised as substratum of consciousness, but they are not identical. Each soul is different from other and distinguished by its visesa qualities. Similarly, mind minds are unique particularity and should not be reduced to each to each other. In our every day life we do differentiate different things with the help of the difference they have in their nature. These particulars have some samanya (general) qualities but also have some specific qualities. Therefore, samanya and visesa are real and irreducible to each other. Even particular is having its individual visesa and therefore irreducible other particulars.

I think, this relation between samanya and visesa should be acceptable to Marxism. What are the implications of accepting this formulation for our understanding of society? We must accept that there are some general characteristics of society and there are some specific qualities of each society. Society cannot be defined as an integration of individuals but it is an ensemble of social relationship and also an integration of individual transforming into a higher level of existence having its own specific qualities,

irreducible to individuals. At the same time individuals have also their specific qualities and they cannot be reduced to each other. Individual as a samanya category, individual as visesa category and society as samanya and visesa category are irreducible to each other. They constitute the different layers of the real world. To argue in this way also means to defend the individuality or visesa ontological status of all these layers reality.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude from the above discussion that there are possibilities of democratic negotiations between different philosophical traditions in general and between Marxism and Nyaya-Vaisesika in particular. Through such a general negotiations we can think of arriving on some universal philosophy of liberation for the contemporary world. I have argued that NV 's concept of ontology can contribute to Marx's concept of ontology in definite way. It can open up Marxist theory to explore several new layers of the real world. Similar exercise can also be done in the context of epistemology where NV contributed significantly. It not only contributed in field of logic and more advance than Aristotelian formal logic but also combines logic with empirical evidence. Such an exercise would possibly contribute to the field of Marx's epistemology.

¹ For instance, Wilhelm von Humbolt, Wilhelm von Sckegaek, Franz Bopp, and T.A.Rixner were writing on importance of Indian philosophy. Hegel refuted all of them by saying that Indian philosophy reflects the childhood stage of development of philosophy in general. (see, Humbolt: 995)

² For detail see, Bhaskar, R. (1995) Plato Etc.: The Problem of Philosophy and Their Resolution, London: Verso.

³ Engels traces the history of dialectics in his book Dialectics of Nature. He divides this history into two sections, Greek and German traditions. See in Dialectics of Nature, Moscow: Progress Publication.

⁴ F. Engels, Review of Karl Marx, 51A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy, On Dialectical Materialism, Progress Publication, Moscow, 1977, p. 51.

⁵ Engels, 'Anti-Duhring', in On Dialectical Materialism, p. 63.

⁶ See Roy Bhaskar, 'Dialectics', Bottomore (ed.) Dictionary of Marxist Thought, op. cit., p.128.

⁷ Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I op.cit., p.29.

⁸ Karl Marx, Capital, Volume I op.cit., p.29.

⁹ F. Engels, 'From a Review of Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', Marx, Engels, Lenin On Dialectical Method, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁰ Engels, 'Anti Duhring', Marx, Engels, Lenin On Dialectical Materialism op. cit., p. 67.

¹¹ Engels, Review Karl Marx, 'A contribution to Critique of Political Economy', op. cit., p. 49.

¹² Engels (1967), 'Anti Duhring', Collected Works, Volume 25, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 2.

¹³ Marx, 'Afterwards to the Second German Edition of the Capital' Marx Engels Lenin, On Historical Materialism, Moscow: Progress, p. 143.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 143

¹⁵ Marx and Engels, 'The Holy Family', Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁶ Ibid, p.26

¹⁷ Engels, 'From Prefaces to the Three Editions of Anti Duhring', Marx, Engels, Lenin On Dialectical Materialism, op., cit., p. 60.

¹⁸ Recently some of the postmodernists are also attempting to interpret Marx. For instance, Derrida uses his method of deconstruction to read Marx's texts. See J. Derrida (1992) Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the work of Mourning and the New International. tr. Peggy Kamuf, NY, London: Routledge.

¹⁹ Althusser has introduced a concept of 'symptomatic reading' in Marxism. He has argued that before we start reading Marx we must look into the way Marx reads his predecessors. First method that Marx has used to read others is retrospective-historical reading. This means, reading other through one's own discourse. Author's merits and failings are measured on the scale of Marx's own standards. In this method, he did not try to explain the absence of certain things that he could see easily whereas the author fails to see. This first method has a limited scope and it limits one to take into consideration the issues, analyses, explanations at a surface level. It does not look into absences.

According to Althusser argues Marx does a second reading of the text and discovers a new text within it, that is less visible, but very significant. Why is there a second text? How to make sense of this second text? The lapses that Marx discovers in his first reading are explained in terms of the transformation of the 'problematic' of the author. According to Althusser, Marx locates the 'problematic' of the author that the author takes up for explanation or analysis. At times while dealing with one 'problematic' the author's attention goes to the other 'problematic' which might not be very clear to the author at that point of time. A new set of question emerges in his mind and he starts answering these questions. These questions themselves are not very clear in the text that he is dealing with. The new problematic becomes clearer in the future texts. However, transition in problematic has already taken place. According to Marx lapses available in the first text are due to this transition in the 'problematic'.

This transition in the 'problematic' leads to the entry of a new epistemology, which is suitable to deal with a set of questions emerging from new 'problematic'. This leads to an 'epistemological break'. 'Epistemological break' signifies

innovation of a new epistemology to deal with a new set of questions representative of a new problematic. The author might not be conscious of the break in the epistemology. However, this helps us in understanding lapses available in the text while doing 'retrospective-historical reading'. The discovery of the new epistemology helps in reading the future texts where problematic that was hidden in earlier texts comes to the surface. Therefore, concepts of 'problematic' and 'epistemological break', according to Althusser, are quite central to Marx's method of reading his predecessors and can be equally helpful in reading Marx's texts. Marx used this method to read Adam Smith, a classical political economist. He locates the visible and invisible 'problematic' in order to read the illegible in Smith's writings. Althusser suggests we can use this method to read Marx. This means that we have to locate Marx's 'problematic' in various texts and we have to search answers of questions he has raised along with questions that he has answered. While, doing this we have to locate where in Marx's transition of 'problematic' takes place and at what point there is an 'epistemological break'. Althusser discovers this 'epistemological break' in Marx's *German Ideology* and *The Thesis on Feuerbach*. He argues that there are double foundations of this single break: a) dialectical materialism and b) historical materialism. First is the birth of 'new philosophy' and second is that of 'new science'.

In other words, there is a difference in the 'problematic' that is, 'the theoretical framework' or system determining the significance of each particular concept, the questions posed, central propositions and omissions, of young Marx and mature Marx. Young Marx was only concerned with human alienation, and self-realization. For mature Marx, the main concern was structures of capitalism. In the 'epistemological break' there are two innovations: a) dialectical materialism, a philosophy and b) historical materialism, and a science of history. Althusser thinks that Marx's real contribution comes after the 'epistemological break'.

²⁰ See Cohen, G. A. (1978) *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 278.

²¹ See for these examples, *Ibid*, p. 279.

²² Marx writes: "...it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic-- in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out..." K. Marx (1984) *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p.21.

²³ K. Marx. *Thesis on Feuerbach (II and VIII)*, Marx, Engels, Lenin, *On Dialectical Materialism*, p. 29.

²⁴ See *Ibid*.

²⁶ Nyaya- Vaisesika (NV) is a full scale philosophical system that has contributed significantly to the realist discourse of Hindu philosophical tradition. Nyaya and Vaisesika are two different schools and they are put together due to their agreement on number of issues. Nyaya deals with the epistemological questions and Vaisesika specialises in ontological issues. There are more than 80 famous scholars in this tradition. Some source books of this system like Nyaya Sutra and Vaisesika Sutra, are attributed to Gautam and Kanad. This philosophy is believed to be crystallised during 200-300 BC.

For detail history see Karl H. Potter *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophy* vol.2 Delhi: Motilala Banarasidas, 1995

²⁷ Richard King, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh: 1999 p.109

²⁸ *Ibid* p.112

²⁹ Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, Oxford and New York Oxford University Press: 1986 p.383.
