THE SEARCH FOR A SCIENCE OF SOCIETY: FROM SAINT-SIMON TO MARX AND ENGELS

If we are to understand the later development of historicism and the manner in which it merged with a comprehensive evolutionism, we must turn from the Romantics and from Hegelianism to those thinkers who represented a continuation of the intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment and who, on that basis, sought to establish a positive science of social development. The sources of this movement were to be found in France, and not in Germany. Although he had precursors, its first major representative was Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon.

Saint-Simon stands in striking contrast to his German contemporaries. In place of their metaphysical idealism he espoused materialism. In contrast to their rejection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century science in favor of an organic view of nature, he was an adherent of Newtonianism. Whereas his German contemporaries accepted all spontaneous expressions of the human spirit as manifestations of divine immanence, Saint-Simon did not reject the cosmopolitan ideals of civilization and knowledge which had characterized the Enlightenment. However, he did go beyond all of his predecessors among the philosophers of history of the Enlightenment, including Condorcet, in his stress upon necessity and the governance of inexorable law in human history.

This assumption on Saint-Simon's part stemmed from his general metaphysical position. He believed that man was a machine, like all other parts of nature: a mechanistic microcosm within the great mechanical macrocosm. Furthermore, he believed that human history paralleled man's physiologically grounded individual development. Thus, he was confident that there was a necessity in human affairs, and he credited Locke with having established a general law of human perfectability, which applied both to the individual's intelligence and to the intellectual development of mankind. However, it was through conversations with the physician Burdin, and not from Locke, that Saint-Simon received a suggestion of the precise form which mankind's intellectual evolution had taken. This suggestion, which had also been anticipated by Turgot and was to be more fully developed by Comte, is that mankind has progressed—and each of the sciences
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has progressed—from a theological to a conjectural or metaphysical stage and then to a positive or genuinely scientific level. What Saint-Simon regarded as needed in the development of the sciences of his own day was that physiology should reach the positive stage of knowledge. He believed that physiology would be able to provide man with a scientifically grounded standard of value, since it could determine his needs; and since Saint-Simon held that the development of the human race paralleled the development of the individual, he believed that there could also be a social physiology which would define the goals of historical development. What these goals were, and in what manner Saint-Simon wished to reform society, is not our present concern. What is important to note is how this developmental necessitarianism was related to historicism in Saint-Simon, since an understanding of this point will considerably facilitate an understanding of the historicism of Comte and of questions which will arise when we consider whether the doctrines of Marx are also to be classified as historicist.

At first glance it may not seem that there need be any connection between historicism and Saint-Simon's view that all things are governed by laws of nature. However, if one construes the laws of nature as regulating a process of development from stage to stage in a continuous series, historicism can scarcely be avoided. For if what transpires is the necessary result of the operation of a developmental principle, then one can only understand any event by viewing it in relation to the law which controlled it; and to relate it to the operation of such a law, one must connect it with what preceded it and what followed upon it. Furthermore, in so far as whatever transpired in the past was part of a necessary process, it would be frivolous to make moral judgments regarding past events: the value of each would be a function of what it had contributed to the process as a whole. While one might still have a tendency to welcome or to deprecate individual occurrences in terms of how they were related to one's own goals, such an attitude could only be justified if one had reason to believe that one's goals coincided with those tendencies which represented the dominant course of history itself. Thus, both the cognitive and the evaluative theses of historicism follow from the assumption that there are laws which determine the direction of historical change. These laws, as we shall see, possess a special logical structure, and it was not necessary for a follower of the Newtonian ideal to affirm that there were any laws which had this structure. Nonetheless, Saint-Simon did insist that there must be laws which controlled the direction of human development, and because of this form of necessitarianism there were a good many points at which he stood in far closer relation to a general historicism than he did to the standards of the Enlightenment. For a fuller development of that species of historicism which is first clearly noticeable in Saint-Simon, one can turn to an examination of the system of Comte.

It is not easy to separate the thought of Comte from that of Saint-Simon, whose secretary and co-worker he originally was. However, even in his earliest works one can find a more radical historicism in Comte's position, and this is especially noticeable in his attacks upon Condorcet, toward whom Saint-Simon had an ambivalent relationship. In Comte's *Plan des travaux scientifiques nécessaires*
pour réorganiser la société, which was written in 1822 while he was still an important collaborator in the Saint-Simonian movement, there are a number of pages devoted to an evaluation of Condorcet’s thought, and from these pages one can see how widely Comte had diverged from the views of progress which had dominated the Enlightenment.

Like Saint-Simon (although he came to express the utmost contempt for him), Comte attempted to carry out in a more adequate way the task which Condorcet had set himself in his *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain*. Comte held that Condorcet was the first to have seen that a positive science of politics could only be established on the basis of discovering a natural law which would explain the necessary and progressive development of mankind; however, like Saint-Simon, he held that his predecessor had failed in his attempt to grasp the true necessity of history. Comte based this charge on the fact that Condorcet had failed to establish a proper and consistent periodization of history. In addition, he contended that Condorcet had failed to free himself from the evaluative prejudices of the eighteenth century. However, he defended Condorcet against a third possible line of criticism: that he had attempted to predict the future. With respect to this third charge Comte held that it was precisely in this attempt that Condorcet showed his appreciation of the proper basis for a science of politics. The predictions made by Condorcet were vitiated not by any lack of necessity in the historical process, but were due to his inadequate periodization of history and to the non-scientific character of his evaluative standpoint.

With respect to the latter point, Comte held that the eighteenth century had lacked a true historical sense, for it had evaluated past ages with reference to its own preferences, and not with reference to the contributions which these ages had made to the progress of civilization. Thus, for example (and here Comte followed Saint-Simon), its evaluations of theocracy and mediaeval feudalism were faulty. As Comte pointed out, this failure to adopt a proper standard of evaluation gave rise to a paradox in Condorcet’s conception of the history of civilization: on the one hand he had emphasized the great superiority of eighteenth-century culture to all previous cultures, regarding the latter as periods of failure; on the other hand he was convinced that there was a law of historical necessity that accounted for the birth of the present out of the past. How, Comte asked, could this be? If the present grows necessarily out of the past, its achievements would themselves have had to be prepared by the past, and past ages could not then be evaluated in a wholly negative manner. It was at this point that Comte explicitly embraced the evaluative thesis of historicism. “We should,” he said, “regard institutions and doctrines as having reached, at every period, the greatest perfection compatible with the corresponding civilization.” Shortly thereafter, in what can be taken as a rejection of Enlightenment standards, he said: “Instead of regarding the past as a tissue of monstrosities, we should, generally speaking, consider society as having been, on the whole, guided with all the wisdom the situation allowed.” This acceptance of the view that a proper evaluation of any institution or doctrine consists in seeing its necessity at a given time,
did not lead Comte to a purely neutralist attitude. Like many others who have accepted the historicist thesis, Comte introduced a criterion of value which he assumed to be implicit within the historical process itself: the criterion of progressive development. Thus he distinguished between the period of full vigor of a society, and the period of its decadence; a distinction which was drawn in terms of when that society was a part of the march of civilization, and when it had become stationary. However, Comte did not deduce revolutionary political consequences from this doctrine. Since he believed that all political systems and all forms of social organization necessarily reflected the state of civilization which was present at any time, the attempt to inaugurate political and social changes before new modes of thought had developed could lead only to disorder, not to progress. This characteristically conservative doctrine of Comte's (which signified a fundamental divergence from the basic economic and social program of the Saint-Simonian movement) was, he believed, the practical import of a positive science of politics. The goal of such a science he had already defined as being that of determining, through an examination of the past, the nature of the social system which the march of civilization tended to produce in the present.13

But what was "the march of civilization," as Comte conceived it? To find an answer to this question we must turn back to his first criticism of Condorcet: that Condorcet's periodization of history was faulty. What Comte had found wanting in Condorcet's view of the past epochs of history was its failure to provide a homogeneous principle of classification: each epoch was viewed as having been ushered in by a noteworthy event, but some of these events were industrial, others scientific, and others political. Thus, according to Comte, Condorcet's actual work never passed beyond the practices which characterize literary history, as distinct from scientific history. What Comte regarded as scientific history he then made clear. Since the problem was one of classifying the epochs of history, he urged as a model the methods of classification used by naturalists when they survey the plant or animal kingdoms. In other words, one should start from some overall view of the most general principle applicable to the domain, and subdivide the classes in accordance with the real relations observed among the facts. By carrying through division after division one will end with a hierarchy of concepts which reflect the actually observed relations among the phenomena in question. Thus, an overall conspectus of history must proceed by showing the existence of an articulated pattern in history, rather than by the more usual genetic, narrative method. As Comte said at the outset of this passage: "The distribution of epochs constitutes the most important portion of the plan in a work of this nature, or, to speak more correctly, it alone constitutes the plan considered in its greatest generality; since it determines the principal mode of coordinating the facts observed."14 Comte, of course, found the overall plan in the same law of the three stages that Saint-Simon had suggested, and it is this law that he then developed in opposition to Condorcet's divisions of history.

The most general principle of classification applicable to the domain of history was, according to Comte, the concept of "states of civilization." The elements of
a civilization are the sciences, the arts, and industry, taking each of these terms in its widest sense. Thus, a civilization consists in a particular development of the human spirit and in the corresponding development of human actions on nature. A classification of civilizations must therefore always take as its point of departure the modes of thought which characterize the sciences, the arts, and the industry of a given time and place. Since Comte, following Burdin and Saint-Simon, believed that there was a natural tendency for the human spirit to advance from a fictive to a positive mode of thought, his classification of states of civilization took on a temporal dimension. This emphasis on the temporal dimension sharply differentiated the domain of sociology from all of the other sciences in Comte’s system. And he observed that within this temporally oriented science, a valid classification was even more important than in the other domains: an apprehension of particular facts, independently of their relations to other facts, is sometimes useful in other sciences, but is of no use within the domain of politics, where each fact must be grasped in its relation to the continuous and necessary march of civilization. And in this connection it is interesting to note that Comte’s emphasis on the unity of history always led him to speak of “Humanity,” or “the Great Being,” or “the collective organism,” as the subject of history: it was not with the specific histories of specific societies that his historical sociology was concerned.

Not only did Comte hold that there was a necessary progression from stage to stage in the evolution of mankind, he also held that this evolution embraced all aspects of human existence. According to his categories of human experience, this meant that the developmental process embraced thought, action, and feeling. At every stage in the course of human development there was a coordination of the intellectual, active, and affective principles in man, and this coordination (which Comte discussed at length in his social statics) provided the necessary and orderly base for the dynamics of historical progress. Thus, for Comte, the development of humanity from its most primitive roots to its highest future attainments represented not merely a necessary development, but a development which included all facets of human experience. Each period of history tended to form a single, unitary whole, and at the same time each was a necessary phase in the overall development of mankind.

Having adopted this consistently monistic view of human history, Comte did not hesitate to draw its necessary epistemological consequences, even though these consequences did not fit with the views of scientific procedure which one would expect from an exponent of positivism.

The first of these consequences was that there is a higher form of historical knowledge than that which proceeds by tracing the specific and detailed interrelations among particular historical events. As we have already noted in connection with his earliest essay, Comte held that the crucial step for historical understanding was to find a general plan in history by means of which the particular facts could be coordinated. Throughout his writings he ascribed greater certainty to the knowledge of the truth of this plan than to any knowledge which could be obtained through an examination of historical records. For example, in
arguing that there never has been retrogression in history which was not of a partial and purely temporary sort, he held that what appears to be retrogression is usually the result of "a too detailed exploration" of human history: a concentration of attention on a single element within the undulatory orbit of civilization leads one to suppose that retrogression has occurred, but a tracing of the main trajectory of history quickly serves to correct this erroneous view.  

Here, as elsewhere, Comte granted positive philosophy a role higher than that granted to empirical science: any particular science becomes complete only by being placed within the larger synthesis of knowledge. It is the synoptic point of view which gives meaning to any element in our knowledge: the highest form of knowledge is not a knowledge of detail, but of overall structure. Thus Comte embraced one of the corollaries which, so far as I can see, always follows from a monistic theory of historical development: an acceptance of the view that there are two ways of knowing, and that the method of detail must be supplemented by that more adequate total vision of the whole, into which each detail can later be fitted.

A second consequence of treating the historical process as a single, necessary, developmental process was Comte's quite unpositivistic introduction of teleology into his explanation of the basis of historical change. What Comte took to be the foundation for the law of the three stages was not (as has often been supposed) the assumption that the individual goes through these stages in his intellectual development, and that the history of mankind necessarily parallels this individual development. Such had been the view of Saint-Simon; and the fact that it has also been attributed to Comte may be due to his well-known statement that the stages of his mental breakdown, and of his recovery, served as a verification of the stages of thought through which mankind passed. However, he could not use a pattern of individual development as a fundamental basis on which mankind's development was to be explained since this would not have been consistent with his doctrine of emergence. Nor would it have been consistent with his conviction that it is not the biological nature of man which determines the forms of social organization, but it is society which determines the social characteristics of the individual. The actual foundation from which Comte sought to derive the necessity of his law of three stages lay in his social statics, which he developed in the second volume of his *Système de politique positive*. There he claimed that the dynamic tendency of history derives from general conditions which are necessary if men are to fulfil each of their three basic faculties: thought, action, and feeling. What he attempted to show was that the conditions necessary for mankind to fulfil these needs are conditions which give rise to precisely the social transitions which the law of development summarizes. In other words, humanity (the collective organism) evolved progressively not because individual human nature changed, but because human nature could only attain its final and proper functioning, its ideal fulfillment, through remaking the forms of social organization.

This, of course, introduced a teleological factor into history, and strangely enough Comte did not shrink from its acceptance: throughout his exposition of the dynamics of historical development he appealed to a determination of the present
by what was to come. For example, one of his laws of sociological method involved him in holding that the understanding of any event depends not merely upon the past and the present, but in seeing it as a link between the past and the future: "The sound appreciation of every intermediate state is subsequent to that of the two extremes which it is to connect." One can also recognize a teleological element in Comte's view of history in his insistence that a proper understanding of any stage in the history of mankind, as well as of that history as a whole, depends upon examining its "adult state" (i.e., its fullest and final development), viewing its past as a gradual preparation for this stage. This, in fact, is the way in which Comte viewed the successive epochs of civilization: as preparations for what was next to come. Thus, for example, his interpretation of the Middle Ages (which he considered to be the period whose proper appreciation was decisive in forming his own true account of history) was dominated by an attempt to show that it was a necessary preparatory stage for the industrial, positive stage of civilization. In fact, he is quite explicit in stating that we must not look upon history as a mass of events which occurred in the past, for in that way it remains barren; rather, it must be viewed dynamically, as a preparation for what is to come.

The justification (if it be that) for this departure from the model of the laws which characterize the non-human sciences lies in the fact that Comte, as we have seen based his dynamic law of development upon his view of what constituted the normal functioning of the basic faculties present in all men, viz., on the principles laid down in his social statics. But these principles, too, were conceived in a teleological fashion: a proper balance was necessary to fulfil the needs of human nature, and it was toward this self-fulfilment that man naturally tended. Therefore, each historical modification of the basic modes of thought, action, or feeling is related, according to Comte, to the end which is normal for it and which, as normal, will ultimately be attained. As Comte insisted, in order to understand or explain any particular segment of history, one must view it in the context of a larger development, and this contention constitutes an acceptance of the cognitive thesis of historicism.

Comte's acceptance of the evaluative thesis of historicism was closely linked to the position we have just outlined, and we need not deal with it in detail. It will be recalled that in his early criticism of Condorcet, he held that if one were to reach a proper evaluation of events one would first have to understand the necessity which is present within the process as a whole. And since Comte regarded this process as tending toward the full development and harmony of man's potentialities for thought, action, and feeling, each phase of the historical process was judged in terms of what it contributed to that process. Thus, for Comte all events were to be judged, as well as being known, through the place which they occupied and the roles which they played within the stream of human history. It is small wonder then that d'Eichthal, who knew Comte's earliest work, saw a deep affinity between his thought and that of Hegel.

That there was this affinity is also attested by the confluences of their impacts on Taine and on Renan. Looking back on the middle of the nineteenth cen-
tury, it may seem strange that Comte, the positivist, and Hegel, the idealist, should have simultaneously exerted a profound influence on the same individuals. To be sure, both Taine and Renan were extremely eclectic, and Renan later expressed, in letters to Pasteur, some reservations concerning Comteism as a movement. Yet is it not apparently strange that two men who are quite properly conceded to fall within the positivist tradition should sometimes praise the thought of Hegel in terms no less glowing than that of any Hegelian? The answer lies, I believe, in the fact that Hegel’s stress on the continuity, the unity, and the necessity of historical development toward a complete human fulfilment was paralleled in Comte and was shared by those in France and in England who remained within the intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment. As Renan said in *L’Avenir de la science*, which was written in 1848, but not published until much later: “L’histoire, non pas curieuse mais théorique, de l’esprit humain, telle est la philosophie du XIXe siècle.”

The influence of Hegel on positivism was not, however, widespread, even in France: it is in Marxism that one finds the chief point at which his thought merged with attempts to explain social change in terms of scientific laws of development. Although there unquestionably were both positive and negative ways in which Marx was influenced by Hegel, there is room for disagreement concerning the nature and extent of these influences. There is, as we shall see, also room for fundamental disagreements concerning Marx’s own interpretation of the laws which explain social change. Both types of question inevitably raise issues concerning the relationships between Marx’s earliest writings and his later writings, and concerning the extent to which his views are to be identified with those of Engels, and those held by later Marxists. In approaching these issues we shall first consider the question of Marx’s relationship to Hegel.

In 1873, in the preface to the second edition of *Capital*, Marx discussed his indebtedness to Hegel’s dialectical method, and he did so in a way that can be taken (and has been taken) to suggest that he had first been influenced by Hegel’s philosophy of history. In this passage, when he interprets himself as having reversed Hegel’s idealism, he might be thought to be referring to the fact that he had put forward an economic interpretation of history which rested not on the self-development of Spirit, but upon changes in the modes of production. Yet, it is in this same passage that Marx referred to an earlier critical study that he had made of Hegel’s dialectic; and this study, as we now know, constituted the third part of his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. When one turns to this earlier source one finds that Hegel’s primary influence on Marx did not in fact involve any aspects of Hegel’s mature views concerning the philosophy of history. Rather, it was from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that Marx drew his conception of the dialectic. Furthermore, far from interpreting human activities as historically rooted, as Hegel’s doctrine of Objective Spirit demands, one finds that Marx’s language and whole mode of procedure had been deeply influenced by Feuerbach’s concern for the generic nature of man, and for the question of what characterizes the essence of man as a species. To be sure, Marx did insist that man is social. In these contexts his emphasis was similar to Feuerbach’s,
stressing what might be termed man's generic sociality; unlike Hegel, Marx was concerned with "social being" in general, and not with the relations of men to the concrete nature of the historical situations in which they are placed. Thus, at this point in his development, Marx can scarcely be said to have been engrossed in formulating a science of society, the aim of which would be to discover laws on the basis of which the concrete manifestations of history could be predicted or explained.

However, in the "Theses on Feuerbach," which date from the following year, there is a radical shift in Marx's philosophic position. One major aspect of that shift was his attack on Feuerbach's failure to grasp the importance of concrete historical and sociological influences on men. Another was his emphasis on practice. While this second aspect of his criticism of Feuerbach was wholly consistent with all that Marx had written before, it is not implausible to hold that Marx's contact with Engels's early work—and then with Engels himself—was in part responsible for his new and radical emphasis on the manner in which historical forces shape men. For example, in Engels's "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," which Marx had published in the _Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher_ before their first meeting, Engels had applied dialectical concepts to changes in social institutions in a manner which finds no clear parallel in Marx's earlier writings. To be sure, in _Ludwig Feuerbach_, which was written after Marx's death, Engels claimed that the basic principles of the Marxist conception of history, as well as of Marxist economics, are to be attributed to Marx himself. One would think, then, that it would have been Marx who had originally had the sharper historical sense. However, if one compares what each had written prior to their collaboration, the contrast between them is striking; and it is perhaps not unwarranted to suspect that Engels's interest and ability in concrete historical analyses may have had an important influence on the development of Marx's thought.

Whether or not this conjecture concerning the seminal influence of Engels on Marx is sound, it is certainly the case that in 1845 and 1846, beginning with _The German Ideology_, concrete historical argument came to play a major and in fact indispensable role in Marxism. This raises a second question on which there is room for considerable disagreement in interpretation: what relation may be said to obtain between historical materialism, as one finds it in Marx, and those modes of explanation and evaluation which characterize historicism?

In considering this question I shall not be obliged to consider many of the most significant aspects of historical materialism. For example, I shall not deal with the Marxist contention that all other elements in a society depend upon, or are determined by, the means of production and the relations of production within that society. Nor shall I be concerned with the factual truth or falsity of the specific analyses or the historical predictions of Marx. The subject which is to be discussed is simply the logic of explanation and of evaluation in Marxism, and this subject—though far more restricted than either of the other aspects of historical materialism—poses more difficulties in interpretation than are apt to be recognized by some opponents of Marxism, or by Marxists themselves.
A suggestive point of departure for this discussion lies in *The German Ideology*, where historical materialism is specifically formulated as a philosophy of history, and is contrasted with the philosophy of history of Hegel in particular. In developing historical materialism in this discussion, Marx and Engels attempted to illustrate their thesis through tracing epochs in the historical development of Western society, and in doing so laid the groundwork for their subsequent interpretations of the stages in man's economic and sociological development. Although they were not yet in a position to formulate their historical materialism in terms of those more complex analyses of economic processes which Marx developed in *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* and in *Capital*, it is clear that they were seeking to explain historical change in terms of basic economic laws. The problem of analyzing the logic of their mode of explanation turns, then, on how one is to interpret the explanatory laws which they used. In this connection we may recall that in the case of Comte the concept of a law of directional change, such as the law of the three stages, tended to force one to accept both the explanatory and the evaluative theses of historicism. The question now to be raised is whether the laws presupposed by historical materialism are also directional laws, or whether they are not.

Now, if we turn to the preface of the first edition of *Capital*, we find Marx stating that it is his aim “to lay bare the economic law of motion of modern society,” and he spoke of the laws of capitalist production as “tendencies working with iron necessity towards inevitable results.” Furthermore, in the preface to the second edition of the same work, we find him quoting with approval a Russian reviewer who said: “The one thing which is of moment to Marx is to find the law of the phenomena with whose investigation he is concerned; and not only is that law of moment to him, which governs these phenomena, in so far as they have a definite form and mutual connection within a given historical period—Of still greater moment to him is the law of their variation, of their development, i.e., of their transition from one form into another, from one series of connections into a different one.” I have italicized the last phrases of this remark, since they suggest that Marx did in fact believe that there are ultimate laws of historical development, as well as that there, are “laws of mutual connection within a given historical period.” It is not to be denied that in the rhetoric of *The Communist Manifesto*, as well as in other works up to and including *Capital*, one finds statements which lend plausibility to the view that Marx and Engels actually believed in ultimate and irreducible laws of directional development in human history. On the other hand, when one poses the question of how the analyses of economic processes in *Capital* were thought by Marx and by Engels to be directly relevant to historical materialism, the only tenable answer would seem to be that it was through the operation of these processes at each successive point in time that the directional trends of history were shaped. If this is true, directional laws would not be irreducible laws, but would be derivative from the non-directional laws of economic relationships; and this I take to have been the position actually adopted by Marx.

That this is so can best be suggested by quoting further from the review to
which I have just alluded, which Marx quotes extensively in the preface to the second edition of *Capital*. The reviewer says:

The scientific value of such an inquiry lies in the disclosing of the special laws that regulate the origin, existence, development, and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher one. And it is this value that, in point of fact, Marx’s book has.

To this Marx himself immediately adds:

Whilst the writer pictures what he takes to be actually my method, in this striking and (as far as concerns my own application of it) generous way, what else is he picturing but the dialectic method?

Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of inquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described.47

In short, the picture of a dialectical development, proceeding in necessary stages, is what results from tracing the inner connections which have successively developed: the development is not one that follows laws of its own. It is precisely this which Marx seems to be saying when he adds to the above statement:

If this [detailed analysis] is done successfully, if the life of the subject-matter is ideally reflected as in a mirror, then it may appear as if we had before us a mere apriori construction.

In other words, I take it that Marx is suggesting that a successful reconstruction of the movement of history through step-by-step analysis will make it appear as if history itself followed its own “apriori” necessary laws, as Hegel had believed; whereas, in fact, this is an illusion arising from the very success of a step-by-step analysis.48 If one were to reject this interpretation of what Marx’s actual method of inquiry was, I do not see how one would interpret such chapters of *Capital* as that in which he traced the genesis of the industrial capitalist.49 Thus, it is my contention that so far as the logic of his argument was concerned, Marx did not depart from that classic form of explanation according to which any particular result would be either predicted or explained on the basis of applying general laws to specific historical circumstances: he did not formulate any ultimate laws concerning the sequence of phases through which societies would necessarily pass.50

Nonetheless, it cannot be denied that in the development of Marxism the modes of explanation which characterize historicism came to be applied. Later Marxists did speak in terms of ultimate laws of historical development, which it was claimed that Marx had established, and according to which it was necessary that all societies should undergo similar evolutionary transformations. As a consequence of this view (which I do not take to have been Marx’s own most usual view), all social changes were seen in terms of the places which they occupied in these transformations. To find the primary source of this doctrine one must, I believe, turn to Engels’s specifically philosophic writings.
As we have noted, that aspect of Hegel's dialectic which was of preponderating influence on the thought of Marx was to be found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and more particularly in the doctrine of alienation and its stages. However, as one can see in Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, that aspect of the Hegelian dialectic which had most influence on his thought was associated with its three basic laws and their manifestation in all phases of reality. Such applications of the dialectic are not evident in Marx's own works. To be sure, in his preface to the second edition of *Anti-Dühring*, Engels referred to the fact that he had read the whole of that manuscript to Marx, and that Marx concurred in its publication. Thus, it would seem that the views which Engels expressed should also be considered those of Marx. Nevertheless, as this passage makes clear, the application of dialectics to the natural sciences was wholly a product of Engels's own studies, and when Engels speaks in the same passage of the fact that it was he and Marx who had rescued dialectics from German idealist philosophy, applying it to the materialist conception of nature and history, the fact that he links a dialectical development of nature with history surely suggests that he is speaking more of himself than of Marx. In fact, in traditional treatments of Marxian dialectics, such as one finds in so orthodox a source as Lenin's "Teachings of Karl Marx," or in M. M. Bober's *Karl Marx's Interpretation of History*, the references to dialectics derive almost exclusively from Engels's *Anti-Dühring* or from two works written by Engels after Marx's death, *Ludwig Feuerbach* and *Dialectics of Nature*. Thus, without accepting the emphasis which is currently being placed on Marx's manuscripts of 1844, and also without in the least denigrating Engels (as is currently the fashion), it is possible to say that Engels's later writings assuredly expand upon the doctrines of Marx, and that in doing so they make these doctrines conform more closely to the very wide and deep strain of historicism which characterized the later decades of the nineteenth century.

That Engels's conception of dialectics involved the assumption that there are laws of directional change is suggested in his famous phrase, "Dialectics is nothing more than the science of the general laws of motion and development of Nature, human society and thought." It was this that he believed to constitute the fundamental connection between Marxism and Hegel's dialectic. In speaking of what was revolutionary in Hegel's thought, Engels said:

> The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes, in which the things apparently stable no less than their mind-images in our heads, the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming to be and passing away, in which, in spite of all seeming accidents and of all temporary retrogression, a progressive development asserts itself in the end—this great fundamental thought has, especially since the time of Hegel, so thoroughly permeated ordinary consciousness that in this generality it is scarcely ever contradicted.

As a consequence of this view, Engels explicitly drew the following inference as to what form modern scientific explanation should take: it was not to be an analysis of ready-made objects, but of processes, and to understand the concrete nature of such processes we must understand them in their origin and in their
development, and in relation to "the interconnection which binds all these natural processes to one great whole."57 The form of this interconnection was, according to Engels, a dialectical development: one of the mistakes of the earlier form of materialism, which Engels connected with mechanicalism, "lay in its inability to comprehend the universe as a process—as matter developing in an historical process."58 It was Engels's contention that while the sciences associated with these earlier forms of thought had made gigantic strides, it was unfortunately true that:

The analysis of Nature into its individual parts... has also left us as a legacy the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things; and therefore not in their motion, but in their repose; not as essentially changing, but as fixed constants: not in their life, but in their death.59

What Engels meant by understanding processes in their life and development emerges very clearly in his treatment of the law of "the negation of the negation" in Anti-Dühring. The question which he there found it necessary to discuss was whether there are not innumerable ways in which a given phase of a process may be negated; whether, for example, if is not equally meaningful to say that a grain of barley is being negated if it is ground up as to find its negation in its germination. To this type of objection Engels answered that such a sequence of events would not constitute a dialectical explanation. In order to explain a process,

I must not only negate, but also in turn sublate the negation. I must therefore so construct the first negation that the second remains or becomes possible. This depends on the particular nature of each individual case. If I grind a grain of barley, or crush an insect, it is true that I have carried out the first part of the action, but I have made the second part impossible. Each class of things therefore has its appropriate form of being negated in such a way that it gives rise to a development.60

Thus, to understand any particular phase of an ongoing process, we must interpret that phase in terms of its place in the process: we must not seek to understand it merely as it is here and now, but in terms of that out of which it arose and that to which, in its turn, it will give rise. And since, as we have seen, Engels insisted that all events in nature and history belonged within a single, interconnected series, it was essential to view them not as single instances of change, but in terms of their place in a unitary and all-embracing developmental process.61

This monism, embracing both nature and history, has obvious affinities with Hegelian monism, and Engels stressed this connection, never attempting to conceal it. For example, in sketching the background of his dialectical materialism he said:

This newer German philosophy culminated in the Hegelian system, in which, for the first time—and this is its great merit—the whole natural, historical and spiritual world was presented as a process, that is, as in constant motion, change, transformation and development. From this standpoint the history of mankind no longer appeared as a
confused whirl of senseless deeds of violence, all equally condemnable before the judgment seat of the now matured philosophic reason, and best forgotten as quickly as possible, but as the process of development of humanity itself. It now became the task of thought to follow the gradual stages of this process through all its devious ways, and to trace out the inner regularities running through all its apparently fortuitous phenomena.\textsuperscript{62}

Here we do indeed have one of Engels’s many expressions of his belief in the existence of an inexorable law of development, embracing all of human history. And in Engels no less than in Hegel one finds that this developmental monism leads to an acceptance of the \textit{evaluative} thesis of historicism.

Such an acceptance is clearly present in the above rejection of what were presumably the Enlightenment standards of judgment as applied to history. However, in \textit{Ludwig Feuerbach} Engels makes this aspect of his historicism perfectly explicit when—in terms reminiscent of Hegel—he says:

All successive historical situations are only transitory stages in the endless course of development of human society from the lower to the higher. Each stage is necessary, and therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origin. But in the newer and higher conditions which gradually develop in its own bosom, each loses its validity and justification.\textsuperscript{63}

However, it would be a mistake to attempt to interpret Engels’s acceptance of either the explanatory or the evaluative theses of historicism solely in terms of Hegel’s influence upon him—important as that influence had been. The Darwinian theory of evolution, with which Engels became acquainted almost immediately upon its publication, also played a crucial role in the manner in which he phrased his historicist views. One may note the importance of this influence in almost every passage in which Engels contrasted modern, dialectical materialism with earlier forms of materialism, for Darwinism was repeatedly cited in this connection. In fact, in his “Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx,” Engels said:

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history.\textsuperscript{64}

It is to the relationship between the theory of evolution and historicism that we shall now turn.