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For Grace

“Here the question arises whether the problem does not express its own absurdity, and hence whether the impossibility of a solution does not lie already in the conditions set by the problem. The answer can often consist only in the critique of the question, can often be provided only by denying the question itself”

- Marx (1986a, p. 65)

“It is relatively easy for the scholar to get the sense of explicitly drawn distinctions and of concepts whose content is pinned down by explicitly formulated principles. But when concepts and contrasts remain implicit like subterranean forces, a special skill is called for on the part of the historian. Indeed it is exactly here that history of philosophy without philosophy is likely to be blind. For to the extent that one is unaware of the range of conceptual structures which might have been at work, one will be at the mercy of the surface grammar of the argument. And to be aware of this range of possibilities is to have philosophized”

- W. Sellars (2002, pp. 455-56)

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Introduction

1. This dissertation is a study of Karl Marx's reflections on philosophic method. I will argue that Marx's method undergoes a series of definite, well-reasoned changes during the period 1841 to 1846. These changes emerge in the course of Marx's early debates with his rivals in the Young Hegelian movement. I will argue that Marx accepts a small set of rationalistic precepts for philosophy, typically associated with traditional, non-naturalistic methods, but is driven, by a series of closely argued criticisms, hewing to these precepts all the while, to a thoroughgoing methodological naturalism. This suggests that there is at least one route by which holding fast to the rational principles that undergird non-naturalism in philosophy eventuates in naturalism.

As I reconstruct it, this line of argument counts among Marx's most significant contributions to philosophy. Nevertheless, it has been almost universally neglected by his readers.

2. The subject matter of this dissertation is what Adolf Trendelenburg calls "the logical question" (cf. Trendelenburg 1843). The question is this: what procedures should philosophers employ, and what sort of logic and theory of concepts should they presuppose, to ensure that philosophy, as a definite mode of inquiry, can attain to knowledge? Thus, the dissertation addresses a cluster of issues at the intersection of logic, normative epistemology, theory of science, theory of reason, and metaphilosophy. I have chosen to refer to all of these as questions of philosophical methodology, lumping them together under the heading of metaphilosophy. If the dissertation still falls a bit awkwardly across existing subdisciplinary divisions, this is because its unity derives less from recent journal debates than from the concerns that motivate Marx and his contemporaries.

3. What does it mean to say that Marx is (by 1846) a methodological naturalist? It means that he suggests an answer to the logical question on which the procedures crucial to supporting philosophy's role as a knowledgeable form of inquiry are the sorts of procedures we employ in the special sciences: observation, nomic explanation, mechanistic explanation, appeal to heuristics, and non-necessary modes of inference, such as inductive, abductive, or analogical inference. Thus, to be a methodological naturalist is to argue for a certain sort of continuity in method between philosophy and the sciences: one on which procedures like those listed above figure prominently.

Methodological naturalism is not the only view according to which there is continuity of method between philosophy and the sciences. One might also hold that both philosophy and the sciences should employ non-naturalistic procedures (e.g. ascent to abstract concepts, appeal to intellectual intuition, or necessary inference). This option is no longer live today, but it remains so in Marx's time. Thus, I have chosen not to define naturalism just in terms of continuity of methods.

4. Note that some Marxists use the term "naturalism" to refer to philosophical frameworks that either (i) mistake transient states of dynamic systems for natural laws, thus for permanent or unchanging features of those systems; or (ii) too quickly explain the phenomena of social science in terms of natural science. Marx himself sometimes uses "naturalism" in these ways (cf. Marx 1986a: 17, 46), though he also uses it in a non-pejorative sense (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 296, 336). I use the term "naturalism" in a number of ways in this dissertation—but I nowhere attribute either of the above views to Marx. I discuss Marx's criticism of these errors in Chs. 4 and 7.

5. One of my objectives, in the course of my presentation, is to establish the distinctiveness of Marx's philosophical point of view. A good deal of contemporary writing about Marx seeks, in

one way or another, to treat his philosophical outlook as a simple extension of Hegel's philosophy. This has arisen as a reaction against the tendency, among 20th-century Marxists, to dismiss Marx's debts to Hegel by appeal to abstract oppositions, like that between idealism and materialism.

However, the new Hegelian readings of Marx also rest on abstractions. It makes sense to say, as Tom Rockmore does, for instance, that Marx is "basically a Hegelian" (Rockmore 2002: 30) and that "the most plausible general description of Marx is as an idealist philosopher" (180), only if we omit to reconstruct the closely argued series of criticisms by which Marx distinguishes his own outlook from the idealism (and methodological non-naturalism) of Hegel and of his peers. I propose to establish the distinctness of Marx's position, therefore, not by drawing abstract generalizations, but by showing, in detail, how Marx's views emerge from the background of classical German philosophy. This will involve discussion of Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, and Schelling.

6. Another of my objectives, however, is just to reconstruct one possible route by which we, today, can argue our way from broadly non-naturalistic assumptions in philosophy to a view of the sort John McDowell disparages as "bald naturalism" (McDowell 1996: 79).¹ Marx's naturalism is ultimately more responsive to the concerns of the non-naturalist, thus more "critical" in its foundations, than many naturalisms that we find in the wild. It is, though, as will become clear in the course of this dissertation, a full-blooded scientific naturalism. I see Marx's reflections on

¹ In *Mind and World*, McDowell refers to "bald naturalism" as a view that "aims to domesticate conceptual capacities within nature conceived as the realm of law" (McDowell 1996: 73). He also claims that the bald naturalist supposes that "we can reconstruct the structure of the space of reasons out of conceptual materials that already belong in a natural-scientific depiction of nature" (73), and "denies that the spontaneity of the understanding is *sui generis* in the way suggested by the link to freedom" (67). Though McDowell introduces this label in the context of the philosophy of mind, I take it to allow of natural extension into metaphilosophy. In particular, I take the essential point of McDowell's description of bald naturalism to be that the bald naturalist employs efficient causes, rather than formal or final ones, to account for phenomena he (i.e. McDowell) takes to be essentially normative or telic in nature. Marx's methodological naturalism falls under the heading of "bald naturalism," therefore, just insofar as it makes appeal to causal explanations in the context of philosophical argumentation—a subset of the space of reasons.

method, therefore, as contributions to the general program of articulating a defensible critical scientific naturalism in the face of the many recent non-naturalist arguments against the possibility.

7. The most recent concerted effort to come to terms with Marx in philosophy is the so-called “Analytical Marxism,” represented especially by G.A. Cohen (2000) and Jon Elster (1985). This program has gone in for serious criticism (cf. J. Cohen 1982; Suchting 1986d; Mandel 1989; Meikle 2008), and has been moribund for at least 25 years. In time, its key representatives have either dropped Marx altogether (cf. Elster and Varoufákis 2015) or winnowed his “bold explanatory theses about history in general and capitalism in particular” down to “a set of values and a set of designs for realizing those values” (G.A. Cohen 2001: 103; cf. also Leiter 2002; Leiter 2015b).

8. Nevertheless, the Analytical Marxists succeed, where others have failed, in taking Marx seriously as a philosopher, where this means subjecting his thinking to the sort of rational scrutiny that brings out both its strengths and its weaknesses. This rare success owes, in no small part, I think, not just to these philosophers—Cohen in particular—belonging to the specific tradition of Bertrand Russell and Rudolf Carnap, but to their having training in logic and in academic philosophy more generally. It is no accident that the best representatives of rival schools of Marx interpretation all share this background in common (e.g. György Lukács, Galvano Della-Volpe, W. A. Suchting).

Marx’s own passing jibes at philosophically benighted rivals make clear that he prizes education in logic quite highly: where these rivals’ work “succeeds in seeing *differences*, it does not see *unity*, and ... where it sees *unity*, it does not see differences” (Marx and Engels 1976: 320).

9. I believe that the failure of Analytical Marxism owes, at least in part, to its refusal to engage with Marx's reflections on philosophical methodology. This refusal is essential to the program. As Cohen writes, "[t]he fateful operation that created analytical Marxism was the rejection of the claim that Marxism possesses valuable intellectual methods of its own" (G.A. Cohen 2000: xxvii). Likewise, Elster claims that Marx's views on method "are of little or no intrinsic interest" (Elster 1985: 4). This is, perhaps, an understandable overreaction against some of the more unproductive claims that have been made about a "Marxist method" in philosophy (cf. Lenin 1976 [1914-16]: 85-318; Lukács 1968c [1919]; Stalin 1975 [1938]; Antonio 1981; Resnick and Wolff 1987: Ch. 1). It also represents a crucial failure of the program, however, and one with far-reaching implications.

10. The Analytical Marxists are weak on at least two points. First, though the analytic tradition in philosophy has always featured a dimension of methodological self-awareness, present already in the Vienna Circle's concern with the role of "elucidations" in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (cf. Neurath 1983: 59-61), we in the tradition have tended to shy away from too much talk about our own methods. As a result, we have been disposed to treat certain core assumptions about method (e.g. that philosophy turns on the analysis of concepts) as necessary or inevitable, and have met countervailing suggestions with suspicion or incomprehension.

Second, Marx's reflections on method are embedded in somewhat arcane debates with his rivals in the Young Hegelian movement of the 1830s and 1840s. Making sense of his arguments requires extensive contact not just with Hegelian philosophy, but with the subtle modifications to that philosophy introduced by Hegel's many followers. Traditionally, analytic philosophers have

been weak on history, and have shunned Hegel as the paradigm of bad (i.e. non-analytic) philosophy. The Analytical Marxist treatment of Hegel has been, accordingly, quite shallow.

11. Luckily, recent developments in the discipline have prepared the ground for a more incisive approach to Marx. First, there has been an explosion of metaphilosophical inquiry in recent years, including extensive debate on the relative merits of analysis vs. other candidate methods for philosophy. Through these debates, we have begun to carve out what we might refer to as a “third-order vocabulary” in philosophy: a vocabulary for describing and comparing second-order methods for adjudicating first-order philosophical problems. This vocabulary has helped make it possible to reconstruct Marx’s proposal that we adopt a new method for philosophy without giving rise to the false appearance that he is urging us to abandon the program of rational criticism. In this connection, I have found recent discussions of conceptual explication (cf. Carus 2007; Wagner 2012) and, more broadly, conceptual engineering (cf. Burgess, Cappelen, and Plunkett 2020) especially instructive.

12. Second, there has been a renaissance in the history of philosophy among analytically-trained philosophers. This has produced a vast new literature on the history of analytic philosophy itself (cf. Reck 2013). Precisely because analytic philosophers have tended to define themselves in contradistinction to Hegel, however, this renewed attention to the history of the tradition has also (surprisingly) produced a revival of interest in Hegel and Hegelianism (cf. Redding 2007). This background puts contemporary analytic readers of Marx in a much better position to grasp those aspects of his philosophy that issue, in one way or another, from his early contact with Hegel.

13. Unfortunately, the few early efforts that have been made to extend the analytic reconstruction of Hegel to Marx (cf. Smetona 2012; J. Evans 2020) have failed to attend to Marx's reflections on method, and have thus failed to grasp the important and purposeful ways in which Marx distances his own philosophical program from those of his Hegelian peers. Likewise, some recent readers of Hegel have located, in his practical philosophy, an Aristotelian naturalism of the sort defended by Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot (cf. Pinkard 2012). There are grounds to believe that the early Marx defends a comparable view. Simply extending the reconstruction of Hegel to Marx, however, does Marx the disservice of occluding his more original defense of scientific naturalism.

It is not enough, therefore, to extend existing treatments of Hegel to Marx. This risks falling into the error, diagnosed above, of abstracting away from precisely those features of Marx's philosophy that distinguish it as Marx's philosophy. What I propose, therefore, is a new analytic reconstruction of Marx, building upon the lessons of recent analytic reconstructions of Hegel, as well as upon recent developments in metaphilosophy, trained on specifically Marxian concerns.

14. My approach to Marx differs considerably from past approaches. Many of the issues discussed here appear not at all in past Marx research. Nevertheless, where questions of method are concerned, I am especially indebted to two traditions of Marx interpretation. First, I was originally spurred to work on questions of method in Marx by my contact with Railton (1984), Leiter (2004), and Forster (2015). These articles stand out, among broadly analytic commentaries on Marx, for their attention to the epistemological worries that arise in the context of Marx's theory of ideology.

I have also been much influenced by the European contributors to the so-called "Scientific Marxism." This includes Galvano Della Volpe, Lucio Colletti, and Louis Althusser, especially as reconstructed by W. A. Suchting. Where interpretation of Marx's first-order commitments is

concerned (e.g. his theory of history, his theory of ideology, his anthropology), I agree with very little these philosophers have to say. On questions of method, however, their writings are essential.

15. With respect to Marx's first-order view, I second Richard Hudelson's call for a renewed "Vulgar Marxism" (cf. Hudelson 1990). An appropriately Vulgar approach to Marx's first-order theorizing that would be at once (i) happy to treat Marx's theories as straightforward contributions to the social sciences, not requiring any special accommodations; and (ii) unafraid to take his claims literally (e.g. about the inevitability of historical outcomes, or the inefficacy of ideas in history). I share Hudelson's suspicion that many historical criticisms of Vulgar Marxism, still today treated as authoritative, in fact turn on vague or false philosophical assumptions.

16. On my interpretation, what it means to give a Vulgar Marxist reconstruction of Marx's first-order views is to recognize that, though he is a philosopher, Marx is also an anthropologist—in particular, a scientific ethnologist. His aim is to identify the mechanisms and laws responsible for producing patterns of culture across societies and across historical epochs. He is, therefore, a happy contributor to the early ethnological tradition of John Lubbock, Lewis Henry Morgan, and Edward B. Tylor. Moreover, all of Marx's major works, from the *1844 Manuscripts* through *The German Ideology*, on to the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* are intended by Marx as contributions to his explanatory program in ethnology. Where Marx criticizes (say) the philosophy of Hegel, or political economy, he does so from the perspective, and in favor of the science of ethnology.

Though my primary purpose in this dissertation is not to defend an interpretation of Marx's first-order commitments, I do present abbreviated reconstructions of both his early and mature anthropological theories. I reconstruct these theories, however, principally to bring out the role

Marx's method plays in shaping them. Thus, I do not provide extensive arguments in favor of these interpretations, nor do I provide any independent arguments in favor of Marx's conclusions.

17. The latter half of this dissertation depends quite heavily on *The German Ideology*. I will take this opportunity to countenance the suggestion, raised first by Hiromatsu Wataru (cf. Oishi 2001: 179) and later by Terrell Carver (cf. Carver and Blank 2014b: 2), that *The German Ideology* is an apocryphal text. I will focus on Carver's writings, as they are more readily available to English-speaking readers. Carver's work on the editorial and reception history of *The German Ideology* divides into two parts: (i) his strictly philological (i.e. textual criticism) claims, which are serious, if not especially important for philosophical purposes; and (ii) the broader lessons he derives from these claims, which are tendentious and overblown. I begin with the philological points.

18. Carver's argument turns, centrally, on the fact that the so-called "Feuerbach chapter," which is most readers' first, main, or only point of contact with *The German Ideology* was in fact never composed, in its received form, by Marx or Engels, but instead pieced together from scattered fragments by David Ryazanov many years after the fact (cf. Carver 2010: 121-22). It is not in question whether these fragments were written by Marx and Engels; they were (cf. 118). Carver simply questions whether it is correct to think of *The German Ideology*, whose first chapter was arranged not by its authors but by its editor, as a book—rather than, say, a collection of unpublished manuscripts, as in the case of Ryazanov's other major editorial credit: the *1844 Manuscripts*.

The German Ideology is derived from handwritten drafts, including large sections just in Engels's hand, and contains small contributions by Joseph Wedemeyer and (perhaps) Moses Hess

(cf. Carver and Blank 2014b: 114-17). Existing editions of the text often fail to make this clear, and to distinguish marginal notes (usually in Marx's hand) from the main body of the text.

19. I find little to argue with here. I would welcome a new English-language edition of *The German Ideology* republished as the *1845-46 Manuscripts*, with presentation matching Marx and Engels's original drafts. There have been efforts at this in German (cf. Marx, Engels, and Weydemeyer 2004; Marx and Engels 2017, 2018), and in Japanese (cf. Hiromatsu 2005), with varying levels of success. Carver himself has produced a new edition of the Feuerbach chapter in English (cf. Carver and Blank 2014a). Since there is not yet a new English-language critical edition of the complete *German Ideology* manuscripts, I have chosen to remain with the MECW edition (cf. Marx and Engels 1975c), despite all of its flaws. Moreover, I will refer to the text just as *The German Ideology*, to avoid confusion.

20. Carver, however, concludes from these philological observations that we are wrong to count the views expounded in the Feuerbach chapter among Marx's philosophical commitments. Though that chapter of *The German Ideology* contains many striking and instructive turns of phrase, nearly every central claim made there is repeated elsewhere in the manuscript.

Carver also questions, however, how much of what we find in the other parts of the manuscript can be attributed to Marx. This is, in part, because he thinks we should infer, from the fact that the surviving drafts are written largely in Engels's handwriting, rather than Marx's, that they do not reflect Marx's views (cf. Carver 2010: 123-24). Now, it is likely that Marx wrote a good deal of this material himself, and Engels later copied it out. Even if this were not the case, however, Marx repeats many of the claims of *The German Ideology* elsewhere in his writings.

21. Carver also worries that characterizing *The German Ideology* as a “book,” rather than as a “writing” (*Schrift*) misrepresents the text’s content (cf. 111). In particular, he seems to think that approaching *The German Ideology* as a book will make us more likely to think that the views expressed therein amount to positive theories. He claims that “[t]he broader project ... of framing the new conception of society, history and politics [defended in *The German Ideology*] as a philosophy, crucially resting on a critique of Feuerbach and Hegel, is itself questionable” (127).

22. Carver’s interpretation of his own philological findings is motivated by a kind of skepticism about meaning: he takes meanings to be fragile things, difficult to catch and hold onto. Thus, he worries not just that calling *The German Ideology* a “book” will mislead us about its contents, but that our grasp of Marx’s writings may hinge on which photographs of him we see most often (cf. Carver 2018: 179). I will admit that, in my efforts to reconstruct Marx’s arguments against methodological non-naturalism, I have paid very little heed to the length of his beard.

It is ultimately not important whether the text of *The German Ideology* was put down in Marx or Engels’s hand. Attributing commitments to a philosopher does not require the kind of evidence Carver thinks it does. You can count the graffiti in my neighborhood among my philosophical commitments, so long as you catch me drawing the assertion stroke in front of it. Marx comments approvingly in the margins of *The German Ideology*, making corrections where he takes issue; and he later refers to the manuscripts as reflecting his views (cf. Marx 1986b: 264).

23. One of my subsidiary aims in the dissertation, therefore, will be to demonstrate, by strictly philosophical lights, that the moves Marx makes in *The German Ideology* are exactly the moves

he needs to make to resolve theoretical problems that arise out of his earlier reflections. I suspect that those readers of Marx most persuaded by Carver's insinuations about *The German Ideology* are those antecedently disposed to treat the text as an anomalous or unwelcome presence in Marx's collected works. My response to Carver, therefore, just is my argument that Marx arrives at the views expressed in *The German Ideology* by a series of well-motivated rational transitions—that these views emerge in the course of his adherence to rational principles he introduces and defends already in his early writings. Thus, I give a strictly philosophical defense of *The German Ideology*.

24. In the first chapter, I introduce and partially motivate the method that Marx begins by criticizing, Rational Explication. As I argue, though Marx often refers to Rational Explication as though it were Hegel's method, it does not correspond exactly to the method we find in Hegel. Rather, Rational Explication is the method adopted by a number of Marx's rivals in the Young Hegelian movement. I motivate Rational Explication by showing how it corrects against the shortcomings of a simpler method, Naïve Analysis. This requires that I first establish a metric for what is desirable in a philosophical method. I do this by introducing the tradition of philosophical criticism, and its ideal of anti-dogmatic criticism. Thus, I show that Rational Explication improves upon Naïve Analysis by correcting upon its inadvertent dogmatism, or conservatism. I then reconstruct Rational Explication at fairly fine grain. In particular, I distinguish the procedure by which it discovers new first-order theories (i.e. explicative inference) from the procedure by which it justifies those theories. This detailed exposition helps to clarify the critical discussion to come.

25. In the second chapter, I turn to Marx's early criticism of Rational Explication, which takes shape in what I call the Accommodation Argument. In particular, Marx claims that, though

Rational Explication aims to correct against the inadvertent conservatism of Naïve Analysis, it falls into a new form of inadvertent conservatism. Explicative inference is a special form of inference, both necessary and ampliative, designed to correct against logical and semantical inconsistencies in the frameworks it explicates. Marx argues, however, that it fails to correct against representational error (i.e. empirically false framework commitments), with the result that some of the contents it preserves across explications are in fact errors. This, in its turn, amounts to a form of dogmatism or excessive conservatism, which I refer to as “conceptual accommodation.” Before reconstructing Marx’s version of the Accommodation Argument, I consider earlier versions of the same argument introduced by F. W. J. Schelling and Ludwig Feuerbach. After presenting Marx’s version, I offer a further generalization of the argument, showing that, given some of Marx’s assumptions, the Accommodation Argument is a special case of the paradox of inference.

26. In the third chapter, I introduce Marx’s first proposed method, Genetico-Critical Explication. This is the method Marx employs in many of his early writings, including the *1844 Manuscripts*. With Genetico-Critical Explication, he intends to correct against the conceptual accommodation problem faced by Rational Explication. In particular, he proposes to replace Rational Explication’s procedure of justification, which is a simple coherence test, by a new, naturalistic procedure of justification, derived from the writings of Feuerbach. On this new procedure, a framework will count as justified just in case we can use it to explain away the fact that advocates for the preceding framework fall into the illusion of treating it as plausible. Thus, we exculpate past inquirers of their errors by identifying the genesis of those errors in misleading appearances. I refer to this procedure as “genetic exculpation.” After showing how Genetico-Critical Explication hopes to correct

against Rational Explication's conservatism, I show how it shapes the argumentative structure of "On the Jewish Question." In the process, I raise some initial worries about the method.

27. In the fourth chapter, I argue that, using Genetico-Critical Explication as a guide, we can arrive at a clear reconstruction of the argumentative structure of the *1844 Manuscripts*, and resolve some recalcitrant exegetical confusions about the text. I begin by outlining Marx's early anthropological framework, comparing it to the frameworks endorsed by Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach. I argue that Marx's anthropology, even on its earliest formulations, is best understood as what I call "ethnological productionism": the view that all of a society's ethnological attributes (e.g. patterns of consumption, rituals, institutions, even kinship relations) are explainable in terms of its patterns of production. I then show that Marx argues in favor of his ethnological productionism, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, by subjecting the concept of <man> he finds in the works of the classical political economists to Genetico-Critical Explication. I argue, however, that this explication presupposes some additional conceptual resources. Making sense of the argument requires treating it as an enthymeme on which two auxiliary explications (i.e. Feuerbach's explication of Hegel, which Marx takes for granted; and Marx's later explication of Feuerbach) function as hidden premises.

28. In the fifth chapter, I argue that Genetico-Critical Explication ultimately fails as a replacement for Rational Explication. I argue that, though Marx does not give an explicit argument to this conclusion, he arrives at views in *The German Ideology* that put him in position to recognize the conclusion. In particular, Marx develops a criticism of the role played by a particular analogical model, which he calls "the philosopher's stone," as it figures in theories of human cognition. I show how Marx brings his criticism of the philosopher's stone to bear on a methodological

proposal by Max Stirner. I then show how that application of the criticism can be extended to rule out both naïve empiricist procedures of discovery and explicative inference. I conclude that Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone shows that no method employing explicative inference as its procedure of discovery can avoid conceptual accommodation. It follows that Genetico-Critical Explication, despite its genetic exculpation procedure of justification, still risks accommodation. I argue, however, that this follows already from my generalization of Marx's Accommodation Argument. Marx's detour into Genetico-Critical Explication, therefore, owes to an oversight.

29. In the sixth chapter, I introduce Marx's mature method, Exculpatory Naturalism. This is the method Marx employs in his mature writings, including *The German Ideology*. I argue that Marx introduces a new procedure of discovery, which he calls "abstraction," and which I identify with abductive inference. He then retains, from Genetico-Critical Explication, the genetic exculpation procedure of justification. On Exculpatory Naturalism, therefore, we arrive at new theories by abduction, and secure their legitimacy as successors in the tradition by explaining their predecessors away as illusions given rise to by objectively misleading appearances. I argue that this coheres with Marx's reflections on the role of practicality as a criterion for concept adequacy: a framework is practical, according to Marx, just in case it provides us with the sort of explanations that make practical intervention possible; it follows that a framework stands in a practical relation to its predecessor just in case it explains how that predecessor arises. I then argue that Exculpatory Naturalism just is historical materialism applied to the special subject matter of the history of philosophy. I show that this approach to philosophy is a full-blooded methodological naturalism.

30. In the seventh and final chapter, I introduce Marx's mature anthropological framework, and show how the argumentative structure of *The German Ideology* is shaped by Exculpatory Naturalism. In particular, I argue that the explanatory resources Marx develops in the course of articulating his mature anthropological framework allow him to give genetic exculpations of rival frameworks. Marx's theory of history just is his mature ethnological productionism, according to which all of a society's ethnological attributes are explainable, in principle, in terms of its patterns of production. His theory of ideology just states that trends in intellectual history are ethnological facts, explainable in terms of production. I argue that Marx's theory of ideology turns essentially on the role played by superficial appearances in fixing our beliefs, and that Marx's pejorative use of the term "ideology" is informed not by Napoleon (as is often claimed), but by Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. I then conclude by showing how Marx subjects his own early anthropological framework to Exculpatory Naturalism: he explains it away as ideology (i.e. an illusion given rise to by misleading appearances) from the perspective of his mature anthropology.

Chapter 1 – Analysis and Explication in Critical Perspective

1. My aim in this dissertation is to reconstruct an underappreciated line of argument in Marx's early reflections on philosophical method. As I understand it, these reflections have implications for a broad family of methods in philosophy (i.e. for perennial, non-naturalistic, and rationalistic methods). Marx, however, is concerned to argue against one method in particular. In this chapter, I will set the stage for my broader reconstruction of Marx's views on method by describing and partially motivating the method he sets out to invalidate. I will refer to this method as "Rational Explication." On Rational Explication, the aim of philosophy is to grasp how the world really is by progressively stripping away all of the inconsistencies that render our concepts inadequate.

2. The first obstacle to our reconstruction of Rational Explication is that, in the course of his philosophical investigations, Marx attributes the method to a wide variety of philosophers. He attributes it (implausibly, I will argue) to G. W. F. Hegel (cf. Marx and Engels 1975c: 326), as well as (more plausibly) to Bruno Bauer (cf. 1975b: 53), Max Stirner (cf. 1975c: 342), and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (cf. 1976: 168). It is not obvious, then, to whose writings we should turn when reconstructing the details of the method.

I propose to treat Rational Explication as a kind of method schema: the outline or skeleton of a method that Marx recognizes at play in the writings of all these figures. When Marx criticizes Rational Explication in Hegel, for instance, his argument reaches Hegel just to the extent that Hegel in fact relies upon the Rational Explication schema—and likewise for Bauer, Stirner, and Proudhon. For this reason, I will treat Rational Explication, apart from any of its ostensible historical sources, as an independently defensible method for philosophy.

3. Compare Marx, here, to Donald Davidson, in “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” (Davidson 1973). It is unclear that any of the thinkers to whom Davidson attributes the “scheme-content dualism” he criticizes there (e.g. W. V. O. Quine, Benjamin Lee Whorf, and Thomas Kuhn) actually accept the doctrine as he characterizes it—though their writings may seem, at times, to suggest such a doctrine. Supposing that Davidson’s arguments against scheme-content dualism are any good, then, we can say the following: these figures’ writings are instructive, at best, just to the extent that they avoid the scheme-content dualism they sometimes suggest. Like Davidson’s, Marx’s object of criticism is no particular article or book, but a general tendency in thought—a pattern of commitments described in outline by the Rational Explication schema, and realized more or less approximately by the thinkers Marx criticizes.

4. In recent years, a number of objections have been raised to traditional methods in philosophy. In particular, many have suggested that these methods are guilty of smuggling uncritical prejudices and dubious folk wisdom into our philosophical theories. Most of these objections target fairly naïve methods in philosophy: unreconstructed varieties of conceptual analysis, uncritical appeals to intuition, and the like (cf. Weinberg 2017). Those directed at more sophisticated methods, such as reflective equilibrium, tend still to represent their targets as knowingly adopting wrongheaded assumptions (cf. Stich 1988; Cummins 1998). This raises the question whether these objections target strawmen (cf. Williamson 2007: Ch. 7; Cappelen 2012; Deutsch 2015). Alternatively, however, we can understand these objections as targeting method schemata, bringing out just what commitments a method must rule out in order to avoid accommodating uncritical prejudices. Whether any philosopher has in fact defended the schemata at issue, then, is beside the point.

5. Rational Explication, however, is neither naïve nor plainly uncritical. It is a contribution to the tradition of so-called “philosophical criticism”—a tradition distinguished, in part, by its close attention to pitfalls of just the sort identified by so many contributors to the recent methodology debate. This is both a disadvantage and an advantage. Unlike many of the schemata targeted in the recent discussions, Rational Explication is quite definite in its workings. It turns on definite assumptions about, for example, the structure of concepts, the nature of meaning, and the procedures by which we arrive at new philosophical knowledge. It is not immediately obvious, therefore, how Marx’s criticism of Rational Explication should bear on other methods that do not share in these assumptions. As mentioned above, I hold that Marx’s argument does have implications for other methods. I will attempt to bring this out in the course of the dissertation.

Marx’s choice of target constitutes an advantage, however, in that his argument cannot be said to target low-hanging fruit. If his argument works, it draws our attention to the fact that even methods designed to avoid falling into uncritical prejudices may inadvertently reproduce the same tendencies one finds in less sophisticated methods.

6. In the first part of this chapter, I will discuss what it means for a philosophical method to be “critical” in the sense just discussed. This will involve me in a discussion of the critical tradition in philosophy as it emerges from the work of Immanuel Kant. In the second and third parts of the chapter, I will motivate the claim that Rational Explication is a critical method by showing how it corrects against the uncritical mistakes of another, less sophisticated method schema. Then, in the fourth and final part of the chapter, I will introduce and reconstruct the Rational Explication schema itself. I aim to describe the method with sufficient clarity and exactness that when I turn,

in subsequent chapters, to its criticism by Marx, it will be possible to pinpoint exactly which principles of the method are under attack.

1.1. The Meaning of “Criticism”

7. I have claimed that Rational Explication—the method Marx argues against—is proactively attentive to many of the worries raised by recent objections to traditional methods in philosophy. I have also claimed that this attentiveness owes something to Rational Explication’s relation to the tradition of so-called “philosophical criticism.” Marx’s work belongs to this same tradition. I will argue in the next chapter that Marx’s argument against Rational Explication ultimately turns on the claim that it fails to realize its own critical aims—that “despite all its invectives against dogmatism, it condemns itself to dogmatism” (Marx and Engels 1975b: 20).

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the motivating principles of philosophical criticism, as it begins with Kant. I identify the core aim of philosophical criticism as subjecting our representations and representational devices (i.e. concepts) to global rational scrutiny. As I will argue, this embodies a commitment to what C. S. Peirce calls “fallibilism” (Peirce 1931: 1.151). I also identify and characterize criticism’s principal object of scorn: dogmatism.

8. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant writes that

[o]ur age is the genuine age of *criticism*, to which everything must submit. *Religion* through its *holiness*, and *legislation* through its *majesty* commonly seek to exempt themselves from it. But in this way they excite a just suspicion against themselves, and cannot lay claim to that unfeigned respect that reason grants only to that which has been able to withstand its free and public examination (Kant 1998: Axi fn).

Criticism is the “free and public examination” of claims by strictly rational lights. Subjecting a set of claims to rational scrutiny can serve, therefore, either to vindicate or to debunk those claims. If

a claim survives rational scrutiny, this will elevate it in the eyes of the critic; if it fails of rational scrutiny, then it must be rejected in favor of claims that better weather the process.

For Kant, it is not only claims and theories, but also concepts, that admit of criticism. Thus, in the Transcendental Analytic section of the first *Critique*, Kant examines the legitimating grounds we have for deploying core metaphysical concepts like <magnitude>, <attribute>, <cause>, and <necessity>. Kant refers to the questions he raises here as “*quid juris*” questions: questions not about how we come by our metaphysical concepts, but about what right we have to deploy them (A84/B116). In examining these concepts, therefore, Kant’s aims are critical: he means to subject our most basic concepts to rational scrutiny, determining whether, and to what extent, we are rational in making use of them. As Friedrich Engels puts it, “[w]hat is genuine is proved in the fire,” and “what is false we shall not miss in our ranks” (Engels 1975: 187)

9. Even in its debunking capacity, philosophical criticism is never merely skeptical or destructive. By subjecting our commitments to criticism, we open the road to cognitive improvement. More exactly, debunking criticism prompts the articulation of new concepts and theories whose function it is to correct against the shortcomings identified. Thus, in the first *Critique*, Kant subjects the principles of the traditional metaphysics to debunking criticism, but also sketches a new, rationally vindicated metaphysics. He claims, in the *Prolegomena*, that this new metaphysics “stands to the ordinary school metaphysics precisely as *chemistry* stands to *alchemy*, or *astronomy* to the fortune-teller’s *astrology*,” such that “no one who has thought through and comprehended the principles of critique ... will ever again return to that old and sophistical pseudoscience” (Kant 2002c: 366).

10. The process of criticism, then, involves the replacement of less adequate concepts or theories by more adequate successors. Kant, of course, takes his own framework of concepts to exhaustively correct the errors of the “ordinary school metaphysics,” but the process is in principle repeatable: subsequent rounds of criticism may replace Kant’s concepts in turn, and so on down the line. Thus, J. G. Fichte claims of his *Science of Knowledge* that it is “nothing other than Kantianism properly understood” (Fichte 1970: I, 469). Marx points out that “Kant would not have admitted Fichte’s authority as a philosopher” just as “Ptolemy would not have admitted that Copernicus had authority as an astronomer,” noting that “[e]very man of learning regards his critics as ‘unauthorised authors’” (Marx 1975: 175). This element of personal caprice does not prevent the rest of us, however, from recognizing that subsequent contributions to philosophy correct and supplant their predecessors. This is the iterative and corrective character of philosophical criticism.

11. Criticism, therefore, is a progressive enterprise: we criticize past concepts or theories with the object of improving them. Kant holds, moreover, that by correcting against the errors of past contributors, but also building upon their successes, the critic aims, ultimately, to arrive at a single, comprehensive philosophical theory or system of concepts. He makes this clear in the introduction to the third *Critique*, where he identifies the aim of criticism as the preparation of a “*system of rational cognition through concepts*” (Kant 2000: 20:195). Elsewhere, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Kant defines a “system” as “a whole of cognition ordered according to principles” (Kant 2002a: 4:467). Philosophical criticism aims, therefore, at generating a single, unifying, rationally organized system of philosophical commitments. In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant relates this point to the iterative and corrective character of criticism:

the *moralist* rightly says that there is only ... a single system that connects all duties of virtue by one principle; the *chemist*, that there is only one chemistry (Lavoisier’s); the

teacher of medicine, that there is only one principle for systematically classifying diseases (Brown's). Although the *new system* excludes all the others [i.e., by standing in as their successor], it does not detract from the merits of earlier moralists, chemists, and teachers of medicine, since without their discoveries and even their unsuccessful attempts we should not have attained that unity of the true principle which unifies the whole of philosophy into one system (Kant 1996b: 6:207).

This reflects Kant's faith in the inevitable convergence of criticism upon a single, unifying theory.

12. It follows that error plays a central role in the process of criticism. In its negative, debunking capacity, criticism identifies inadequate concepts (or claims) as occasions for the introduction of concepts or theories better prepared to weather rational scrutiny. The principal enemy of criticism, therefore, is not error *per se*. Rather, Kant makes clear that “[c]riticism ... is opposed only to dogmatism, i.e., to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them” (Kant 1998: Bxxxv). The dogmatist refuses to submit their concepts or theories to rational scrutiny, and in this way impedes the program of criticism. Thus, Kant is committed to the anti-dogmatic character of criticism.

13. Kant's animadversion to dogmatism in theoretical matters mirrors the contempt expressed by philosophers like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau for arbitrary authority in the social sphere. Kant's criticism of the foundations of metaphysics mirrors these philosophers' efforts to debunk (or vindicate, in Hobbes's case) the normative grounds of existing institutions by rational criticism.² The program of philosophical criticism is a central component in what Kant

² On this note, Engels writes that the representatives of the French enlightenment “were themselves extreme revolutionists,” who “recognised no external authority of any kind whatever,” such that “[r]eligion, natural science, society, political institutions, everything, was subjected to the most unsparing criticism: everything must justify its existence before the judgment-seat of reason, or give up its existence” (Marx and Engels 1989: 285). Engels soon claims, however, that “this eternal reason was in reality nothing but the idealised understanding of the eighteenth-

calls the program of “enlightenment”: the historical process by which human beings free themselves, through the exercise of reason, from all forms of arbitrary intellectual authority. As A. W. Carus writes, the enlightenment “is identified with the idea that improved knowledge can be an instrument of individual and social liberation” (Carus 2007: 1).

14. If it is true that improving our knowledge—in particular, through the criticism of concepts and theories—is instrumental to personal and social liberation, then dogmatism, by impeding criticism, and in that way impeding the progress of enlightenment, also impedes personal and social liberation. For this reason, Kant insists that “[o]ur age cannot bind itself and conspire to put the following one into such a condition that it would be impossible for it to enlarge its cognitions ... and to purify them of errors, and generally to make further progress in enlightenment” (Kant 1996a: 8:39). To bind ourselves in this way is to shelter some subset of our concepts or claims from rational scrutiny, and thus invest them with an arbitrary authority. Criticism aims, therefore, not just to correct as errors those concepts or theories that do not hold up to sustained rational scrutiny, but also to abolish, as “crime[s] against human nature” (39), all such dogmatic pacts.

The anti-dogmatic character of criticism just amounts, therefore, to fallibilism. Narrowly defined, fallibilism is the claim that all of our commitments are, in principle, subject to revision or abandonment upon rational scrutiny. Defined more broadly, fallibilism also entails commitment to the inevitable convergence of criticism upon a single, unifying theory (cf. Margolis 1998). On either definition, fallibilism enjoins Peirce’s maxim for philosophy and science: “Do not block the way of inquiry” (Peirce 1931: 1.135). Thus, philosophical criticism, in its commitment to

century citizen, just then evolving into the bourgeois” (288). Engels’s charge is that the enlightenment thinkers’ method of criticism itself somehow embodies uncritical prejudices characteristic of the time. Bringing out what it means to say that a method of criticism embodies dogmatic belief is one of the overarching aims of this dissertation.

fallibilism, disallows any thoroughgoing conservatism about philosophical commitments. Peirce writes that “[c]onservatism—in the sense of dread of consequences—is altogether out of place in science—which has on the contrary always been forwarded by radicals and radicalism, in the sense of the eagerness to carry consequences to their extremes” (1.149). Dogmatism, then, just is a sort of excessive conservatism. More exactly, it is, at bottom, a problem of cognitive conservatism.

15. To review: philosophical criticism has its beginnings in Kant, and is characterized by its (i) corrective; (ii) iterative; (iii) convergent; and (iv) anti-dogmatic, anti-conservative, or fallibilist dimensions. In criticism, we (i) subject our concepts or theories to rational scrutiny in order to replace them by more adequate concepts or theories. We then (ii) repeat this process indefinitely, with (iii) the aim of generating a single, unifying theory or conceptual framework. This requires, in turn, that we (iv) abolish all dogmatic pacts that would preclude our subjecting select domains of concepts or claims to this same scrutiny. It is this general program, and not Kant’s more specific strategy for pursuing the program (i.e. in his three critiques) that one finds faithfully reproduced in the work of the core contributors to the critical tradition in philosophy.

16. In an early essay co-written with F. W. J. Schelling, Hegel claims that true criticism “is not a merely negative destruction” of previous frameworks, but a “preparation of the way for the arrival of true philosophy” (Hegel and Schelling 2000: 285). Thus, Hegel and Schelling understand inadequate, transitional phases in the development of philosophical concepts or theories as muddled approximations to the true philosophy to come. Understanding error as the sort of thing that masks the truth, Hegel writes that it is the work of criticism to correct against errors, to “tear the mask off,” but that it must also “interpret the way and the degree in which [the true philosophy]

emerges free and clear, and the range within which it has been elaborated into a scientific system of philosophy” (277). Thus, criticism corrects against past errors (by “tear[ing] the mask off”), but also builds upon past successes, with the aim of converging upon a single, unifying system.

Hegel and Schelling go on to pursue very different and opposed strategies for implementing philosophical criticism, but both remain faithful to Kant’s program, in the very broad sense outlined here, to the ends of their careers.

17. Those writing in Hegel’s wake often signal a similar fidelity to the critical program. Ludwig Feuerbach writes, in his *Presentation, Development, and Criticism of the Leibnizian Philosophy*, that the “true criticism of a philosophy lies in its own development, for it is made possible only by the separation of the essential from the accidental” (Feuerbach 1910: 2; my translation). What is essential in a given philosophy is what survives rational scrutiny. What is accidental is what is found to be erroneous or inadequate in it. In *The Good Cause of Freedom and My Own Concern*, Bauer writes that, having carried out its purpose, “[c]riticism no longer knows dogmatism” (Bauer 1842: 204; my translation). Elsewhere, he notes that “a long series of centuries” were needed before “enlightenment and criticism could reach the completion and purity” necessary to make possible a “new epoch in human history” (1843a: 63; my translation).

Marx, too, in an early letter to Arnold Ruge, makes clear that he is “not in favour of raising any dogmatic banner,” and recommends a “*ruthless criticism of all that exists*, ruthless both in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just as little afraid of conflicts with the powers that be” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 142). Criticism, then, is the common cause of the philosophers discussed in this dissertation. Their intermural disputes concern not whether, but how best to implement the program of philosophical criticism.

18. As I have already suggested, Peirce, too, under the influence of Kant, Hegel, and Schelling, is a strong advocate for the critical program. He holds that “we must not admit any specified proposition to be [beyond our powers of doubt] without severe criticism” (Peirce 1998: 433), and that the “marvellous self-correcting property of Reason, which Hegel made so much of, belongs to every sort of science” (Peirce 1934: 5.578).

Likewise, John Dewey writes, in his *Experience and Nature*, that “philosophy is a critique of prejudices” (Dewey 1929: 37), and in his *Logic* that “[t]he developing course of science ... presents us with an immanent criticism of methods previously tried” (1938: 6). With this foothold in early American philosophy, the basic principles of philosophical criticism reemerge in the writings of Karl Popper (1983, p. xxxv), Imre Lakatos (1978, p. 30), and Wilfrid Sellars (1967, p. 353). This is worth noting, in particular, because it shows that this dissertation—along with the theoretical vantage point it presupposes—stands in fairly direct continuity with the critical tradition, and thus with the methods I aim to reconstruct.

19. Many objections that critical philosophers raise against one another turn on the suggestion that such-and-such commitment, defended by erstwhile critic X, betrays the cause of criticism by entering, however unwittingly, into this or that dogmatic pact. The most sophisticated of these objections attack not only particular commitments, but the method of criticism adopted.

Thus, Hegel criticizes Kant’s method of criticism on the grounds that, while it promises to subject our concepts to rational scrutiny, it tacitly enters into a dogmatic pact. In particular, Hegel claims that Kant’s method of evaluating the adequacy of concepts presupposes that our concepts are peculiar to us as human beings, and thus adequate only to the objects of our experience. That

is, Hegel takes Kant to uncritically assume a kind of anti-realism about the objects of commonsense experience. Hegel's criticism is not directed just against this assumption, but against Kant's method of criticism, just insofar as it unwittingly makes room for the assumption (cf. Hegel 1977a: 67; 1991b: §§40-43; 2010: 40-41). As William Bristow puts the point, Hegel's complaint is that "the procedure of justification of Kantian critique already implicitly presupposes subjectivism" (Bristow 2007: 50). If Hegel is right, then commitment to this particular dogmatic pact follows just from adopting Kant's method of criticism—such that Kant himself cannot avoid falling into dogmatism without fundamentally revising that method.

20. In practice, then, philosophical criticism consists as much in the rational scrutiny of methods of criticism as it does in the rational scrutiny of dogmatic pacts (tacit or otherwise), and of particular concepts or theories. Accordingly, Marx insists that we avoid taking up an "uncritical attitude to the method of criticising," lest the rational corrective activity of philosophical reflection itself be reduced to the shoring up of irrational prejudices and folk wisdom (Marx and Engels 1975a: 327). For this reason, critical philosophers are expressly concerned with the kinds of worries (e.g. about the assumptions inadvertently smuggled in by our choice of method) raised by many contributors to recent debates about philosophical method.

1.2. Naïve Analysis

21. I have claimed that Rational Explication—the method Marx criticizes—is itself critical in the sense just adumbrated. In particular, I will argue that Rational Explication corrects against a particular sort of conservatism problem, faced by a family of more naïve philosophical methods. To bring this out, I will introduce a method schema, Naïve Analysis, to represent this family. In

part three of this chapter, I will draw upon the Transcendental Dialectic section of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to highlight the problems that emerge for Naïve Analysis. In part four, I will show how Rational Explication corrects against these problems. Here, however, I will simply introduce the basic principles of Naïve Analysis, beginning with an analogy to the method of G. W. Leibniz.

22. Kant himself introduces the Naïve Analysis schema when he announces that his first *Critique* invalidates any attempt to “bring about a metaphysics *dogmatically*,” through the “analysis of concepts that inhabit our reason *a priori*” (Kant 1998: B23).³ Elsewhere in the first *Critique*, Kant claims that the “usual procedure of philosophical investigations” is “that of analyzing the content of concepts that present themselves and bringing them to distinctness” (A65/B90). In his 1763 prize essay, he claims that such concepts are “always given, albeit confusedly or in an insufficiently determinate fashion” (1992a: 2:276). Thus, the adherent to Naïve Analysis believes that we can arrive at philosophical understanding just by taking up the concepts already given to us, and working out, through analysis alone, “what is contained in these concepts” (1998: B23). The aim of philosophy, on Naïve Analysis, is to arrive at a maximum of clarity in our thinking.

23. On its face, Naïve Analysis looks a lot like Leibniz's method for philosophy. In his *Discourse on Metaphysics*, Leibniz claims that the mind “already thinks confusedly about everything it will ever think about distinctly” (Leibniz 1989a: 58). Elsewhere, Leibniz makes clear that analysis begins with what he calls “*nominal definitions*,” on which we attribute to concepts just those predicates (or “marks”) necessary to distinguish their objects “from other things” (1989b: 26). In

³ See also Fichte (1970, p. I, 453-54), however, where Fichte admonishes all previous “system-makers” in philosophy: they “proceed from some concept or other; without caring in the least where they got it from, or whence they have concocted it, they analyze it, combine it with others to whose origin they are equally indifferent, and in reasonings such as these their philosophy itself is comprised.”

the course of analysis, we further distinguish our *analysanda* from neighboring concepts by arriving at more and more complete specifications of their determining predicates. In the limit case, “[w]hen everything that enters into a distinct notion is, again, distinctly known, or when analysis has been carried to completion” (24), we arrive at “*real definitions*” (26) of our concepts: definitions that countenance every one of their determining predicates.

Likewise, on Naïve Analysis, we begin analysis by specifying a set of basic truisms about the *analysandum*. Analyzing <gold>, we specify that the object to which <gold> applies is a metal, that it is heavy, that it is manipulable, etc. In the course of analysis, we fill these truisms out with further specifications. Analysis consists in bringing our subjective definition of a concept in line with its real (i.e. objective) definition.

24. Leibniz gives a fairly sophisticated account of the operations involved in analysis (i.e. in moving from less determinate to more determinate definitions of our concepts). He models the procedure on geometrical analysis, acknowledging that the latter involves elements of both apodictic “judgment” and ampliative “invention” (Leibniz 1996: 368). He also recognizes a role for empirical “experiments” in bringing analyses to satisfaction (120)—though he suggests that it would be preferable if the operation could proceed strictly by necessity (476; cf. Hintikka and Remes 1974: 133-34). Leibnizian analysis, then, is a subtle art.

Naïve Analysis, however, is naïve, not subtle. Accordingly, the advocate for Naïve Analysis will endorse a more straightforward account of how we move from nominal to real definitions. Suppose we intend to analyze the concept C. We will do so just by drawing out, through analytic inference, the consequences of the truisms constitutive of our initial, nominal definition of C. Since these consequences are contained already in that nominal definition, this

adds nothing to C itself, but it does fill out our subjective grasp of C. Call this operation “strict analysis.” Strict analysis is Naïve Analysis’s procedure of discovery (i.e. the procedure by which it modifies our representations and representational devices).

25. In its procedure of discovery, Naïve Analysis more closely mimics Christian Wolff than Leibniz. Wolff claims in his *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy* that “both philosophy and mathematics derive their methods from true logic,” where this means that philosophical demonstrations proceed by analytic inference from explicitly defined basic concepts (Wolff 1963: §139). However, Wolff also holds that “only terms which have been explained with accurate definitions should be used in philosophy” (§116). Thus, he does not propose to work our concepts up into definitional form through analysis, but to begin with definitions.

Kant dismisses Wolff’s method on this point, claiming that “it would have to have been a happy coincidence indeed if the concept, thus reached [i.e., by stipulation] ... had been exactly the same as that which completely expresses the idea ... given to us” (Kant 1992a: 2:277). Naïve Analysis adopts Wolff’s analytic procedure of discovery, but it begins—like Leibniz’s method—with the confused concepts already given to us, not with stipulated definitions.

26. There is another point of divergence between Leibniz and Naïve Analysis. Leibniz holds that philosophy aims to reduce complex concepts to conceptual primitives, and to reduce complex truths to tautologies (cf. Leibniz 1989c: 30-31). As I construct it, Naïve Analysis is concerned instead to chart the manifold relations between concepts, with no preference for the more basic.

In *Analysis and Metaphysics*, P. F. Strawson distinguishes two models of conceptual analysis: reductive and connective analysis. On the reductive approach, to analyze a concept is to

work toward “a clear grasp of complex meanings by reducing them, without remainder, to simple meanings” (Strawson 1992: 17-18). On the connective approach, by contrast, to analyze a concept is to investigate “an elaborate network, a system, of connected items, concepts, such that the function of each item, each concept, could, from the philosophical point of view, be properly understood only by grasping its connection with the others, its place in the system” (19). Naïve Analysis hews closely to the latter, connective, model.

27. It follows that the aim of Naïve Analysis is not just to render our grasp of concepts more determinate, but also to arrive at an understanding of how they hang together. The practitioner of Naïve Analysis will be satisfied that they have arrived at adequate philosophical understanding just in case they have understood how our concepts cohere with one another. Likewise, to demonstrate the adequacy of one’s analysis, the practitioner of Naïve Analysis need only show how the method brings out this coherence. This coherence test is Naïve Analysis’s procedure of justification (i.e. the procedure by which it justifies the modifications it makes to our representations and representational devices).

28. We find a version of this procedure in Moses Mendelssohn, who claims that “[t]he analysis of concepts is for the understanding nothing more than what the magnifying glass is for sight” (Mendelssohn 2001: 258)—an instrument that reveals otherwise unseen connections. In particular, Mendelssohn claims that there is “a purely speculative part of philosophy in which ... attention is directed solely at the combination of concepts and their coherence” (272; cf. Wolf 2019: 39). Mendelssohn holds, however, that philosophy must go on to demonstrate the adequacy of these

concepts to reality (i.e. to demonstrate the actuality of the objects picked out by these concepts). Naïve Analysis takes philosophy to consist just in maximizing coherence through strict analysis.

29. Let me introduce an example. Kant suggests that the following truisms nominally define the concept <appetite>: “every appetite presuppose[s] the representation of the object of the appetite; that this representation [is] an anticipation of what [is] to come in the future; [and] that the feeling of pleasure [is] connected with it; and so forth” (Kant 1992a: 2:284). On Naïve Analysis, I will apply the procedure of strict analysis, drawing necessary consequences out of this nominal definition. I will add to my working definition of <appetite>, for instance, that (i) the feeling of pleasure is anticipated in the future; and (ii) that what is to come in the future is an object. Some consequences may be harder to recognize than others. We can reach them, however, by applying accepted logical rules to the premises of the nominal definition in different combinations.⁴ Incorporating these consequences renders our subjective grasp of <appetite> more determinate, and shows how its determinations hang together, making our working definition more coherent.

30. At every definite time, each contributor to inquiry occupies some definite epistemic position. My epistemic position consists of at least the following: my subjective grasp of the contents of my concepts; the set of claims I am (knowingly or unknowingly) committed to; and the set of theories

⁴ An issue arises here: if we incorporate the full analytic consequence set of our nominal definition into our working definition, our real definition will include an infinitely large subset of junk commitments, such as follow on, e.g., the recursive application of disjunction introduction: “appetite presupposes its object *or* Denver is in Wyoming,” “(appetite presupposes its object *or* Denver is in Wyoming) *or* Denver is in Montana,” “((appetite presupposes its object *or* Denver is in Wyoming) *or* Denver is in Montana) *or* Denver is in Texas,” and so on). See Harman (1986, p. 12). A cautious formulation of Naïve Analysis would specify that only non-junk consequences are to be incorporated. We probably cannot distinguish junk from non-junk consequences by a simple formula. Thus, the formal problem remains. I assume, however, that the practitioner of Naïve Analysis is a human equipped with an inbuilt capacity to distinguish junk from non-junk consequences—so there is no problem in practice. A practical problem will arise, however, if we decide to train a computer in Naïve Analysis. This holds for all formal problems. Computers are, in one of their functions, instruments for transforming formal problems into practical problems.

I (knowingly or unknowingly) accept. It includes all of the factors internal to my situation as a knower, but nothing of the world outside. A philosophical method provides us with a set of procedures for making interventions in epistemic positions. In particular, a method's procedure of discovery defines the kind of changes it makes to epistemic positions. Its procedure of justification, by contrast, provides us with an account of why we should take these changes for improvements (i.e. by introducing a candidate definition of epistemic goodness, and showing how the associated procedure of discovery plays a meliorative role relative to that definition).

Thus, Naïve Analysis's procedure of discovery modifies my epistemic position by drawing analytic consequences out of my working definitions, and rendering them more determinate—thus altering my subjective grasp of the contents of my concepts. The method's justification procedure defines the epistemic good in terms of coherence, and shows that a given application of strict analysis constitutes an epistemic improvement just in case it renders our beliefs more coherent.

31. Suppose that on my current epistemic position, I possess a radically underspecified nominal definition A of the concept <appetite>. Now, suppose that you apply Naïve Analysis to my epistemic position, drawing out analytic consequences from this working definition of <appetite> in order to articulate a new, more determinate definition A'. You now suggest that I adopt A'. My first instinct will not be to ask how this change amounts to epistemic gain, prompting you to deploy Naïve Analysis's coherence-based procedure of justification. It will be to ask how your talk of A' has anything to do with me. I was talking about A. Now you are talking about A'. Are these not two separate topics? Why should I change the topic of my conversation to mirror yours? Suppose that A' allows me to resolve a broad family of issues. These issues concern A'. Will this not still leave unanswered any outstanding questions I have about A?

These concerns cluster around the rational continuity of A and A'. That is, to answer my questions, you will have to explain in what sense A' is rationally continuous with A, such that adopting A' does not constitute an irrational change of topic. Call this the "Continuity Problem."

32. Naïve Analysis has a powerful answer to the Continuity Problem. In fact, its answer is so strong that, approaching the problem with Naïve Analysis in mind, the Continuity Problem can seem to embody a confusion. There are two ways to state Naïve Analysis's solution. They divide roughly across what Rudolf Carnap calls the "formal" and "material" modes of speech (Carnap 1937: §75).

33. In the formal mode, you can resolve my worry about the rational continuity of talk about A and talk about A' by showing how A' follows by necessity—by analytic inference—from A. This makes clear that A' is contained already in A (i.e. that I am already committed to A' when I use A). The necessary character of analytic inference plays a key role here: once you have shown that A' follows by necessity from A, I must begin to talk in terms of A', on pain of irrationality. Putting it another way, by showing that A' follows by necessity from A, you have shown that I do not need to change the topic at all in adopting A' as my working definition of <appetite>.

Speaking now in the material mode, Naïve Analysis's solution to the Continuity Problem is that both A and A' are candidate expressions of the content of a single underlying concept, admitting of only one real definition. This real definition is contained already in A as an analytic consequence. Thus, as soon as I have any working definition of <appetite>, I already possess, in principle, the real definition of <appetite>. The task of philosophy is to bring us to awareness of the total analytic consequence set of the working definitions we already accept.

34. The material mode expression of Naïve Analysis’s solution to the Continuity Problem makes clear that Naïve Analysis is what I call a “perennial method” in philosophy. A perennial method is a method that takes philosophical inquiry to consist in our somehow bringing out or elucidating what we already know. Thus, the advocate for Naïve Analysis maintains that all of our concepts—including those concepts that will someday figure in our most successful descriptions of reality—are given to us already, though in confused form, at the very start of inquiry. In this spirit, Leibniz holds that “our soul knows ... all things virtually” (Leibniz 1989a: 58). He traces this view, in turn, to Plato’s *Meno*, in which Socrates claims likewise that “the truth about reality is always in our soul” (Plato 1997a: 86b). Thus, we can understand Plato’s theory of *anamnesis* as an attempt to account, metaphysically, for the material mode expression of the perennial tradition’s commitment to the in-principle derivability of final definitions from their merely nominal precursors.

35. Another problem arises here, having to do with the identity of concepts. How do we decide when two working definitions pick out the same concept? Aside from accidental orthographic similarity, what makes A and A’ *analysantia* of the same concept? On Naïve Analysis, the answer is that definitions standing further along in the progress of analysis will contain their predecessor definitions as proper parts. Thus, A’, being an extrapolation from and elaboration upon A, will contain all of the determinations characteristic of A, as well as further determinations analytically derivable from those determinations. In particular, all candidate definitions of <appetite> will contain, at least, the initial truisms taken to nominally define <appetite>. No element of a nominal definition may be discarded or rejected in the course of strict analysis. Thus, A and A’ define the same concept just in case (i) A’ contains the same nominal definition as A; and (ii) none of the determinations characteristic of A’ fail to follow by analytic inference from A. Concepts remain

self-identical through the process of strict analysis just in virtue of preserving their nominal definitions. A concept's nominal definition just is its real definition presented in confused form.

36. Naïve Analysis is a perennial method. It is also a non-naturalistic and rationalistic method. It is non-naturalistic because it makes no appeal to naturalistic procedures, either for modifying our epistemic position or for justifying the modifications we make to it. Naturalistic procedures include observation, nomic explanation, mechanistic explanation, appeal to heuristics, and non-necessary modes of inference, such as inductive, abductive, and analogical inference. The Naïve Analysis schema is rationalistic because it takes philosophical understanding to be attainable just through the consistent and sustained application of our rational capacities. The real process of drawing out analytic consequences takes time—but on a long enough timeline, any rational inquirer applying Naïve Analysis will arrive at total understanding (or so the schema suggests).

1.3. A Conservatism Problem for Naïve Analysis

37. The case against Naïve Analysis that I will reconstruct here emerges from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. As I claimed above (cf. §1.8), Kant's aim in the first *Critique* is to subject given metaphysical concepts to rational scrutiny, determining whether and to what extent we are right to deploy them in descriptions of the world. His conclusions—both those that are broadly vindicatory and those that are broadly subversive in their upshot—turn on a central distinction between appearances (i.e. the objects of our specifically human form of intersubjective empirical knowledge) and things in themselves (i.e. the mind-independent reality that undergirds or gives rise to appearances). Kant's argumentative strategy is twofold: he argues, in the vindicating mode, that a host of received concepts are rationally adequate, even rationally necessary, so far as they

are applied to appearances; and he argues, in the debunking mode, that these same concepts are unsuited to, and therefore rationally inadequate so far as they are applied to, things in themselves.

38. Kant applies this strategy in different ways throughout the first *Critique*. In the Transcendental Analytic section, he argues that certain representational devices, such as our distinctly human representations of space and time, as well as our most basic metaphysical concepts, survive rational scrutiny just insofar as our having any knowledge at all presupposes and requires them. Thus, he argues, employment of these devices is rationally permissible because it is rationally necessary. He also provides a sophisticated argument, however, to the conclusion that these devices “can never be of *transcendental*, but *always* only of *empirical* use” (Kant 1998: A246/B303).

39. In the Transcendental Dialectic, by contrast, Kant argues that a subset of given concepts (i.e. <world-whole>, <freedom>, and <immortality>) play no rationally adequate descriptive role whatever, but that they do play a rationally necessary non-descriptive role as regulative ideals for knowledge (i.e. roughly, as normative principles to guide inquiry, pointing to epistemic goals not actually attainable in practice). In the Antinomies, for instance, Kant provides arguments, modelled on those of the ancient skeptics, to the conclusion that making descriptive use of such concepts can license one both to a given claim—“The world is finite in time and space”—and to its direct antithesis—“The world is infinite in time and space” (cf. Kant 1998: A424/B451; Forster 2008). This result being intolerable, the descriptive application of these concepts fails of scrutiny.

40. Kant’s line of argument suggests the following criticism of Naïve Analysis. The practitioner of Naïve Analysis takes it that our concepts, once subjected to strict analysis, will turn out to be

rationally adequate, where this means that they will turn out to be wholly coherent—both with their own consequences, and with each other. This suggests that any inconsistencies in our concepts are in fact inconsistencies only in our subjective grasp of those concepts, not in the concepts themselves. Kant shows (or claims to show), however, that certain concepts, employed in certain contexts, necessarily give rise to inconsistencies. This suggests that a key supposition of Naïve Analysis—that all given concepts are, in their objective content, wholly coherent—is false.

More importantly, Kant’s argument draws our attention to the fact that this supposition (i.e. the supposition that all concepts are coherent in their objective content) despite being essential to Naïve Analysis, is not argued for, but simply presupposed by the schema. Thus, Kant’s argument reveals Naïve Analysis to be tacitly involved in a dogmatic pact, the promise of which is to treat all concepts as in-principle coherent, come what may.

41. I say that this line of criticism is suggested by Kant’s line of argument because, strictly speaking, it does not follow. Kant’s criticism is directed at the uses to which philosophers put their concepts. When we mistake the appearances for the things in themselves, we come inadvertently to apply concepts to the things in themselves. Kant criticizes this as a misapplication of concepts.

Whether this amounts to criticizing the concepts themselves, in terms of their content, depends on how we understand conceptual content, and in particular on whether we take the uses of a concept to determine its content. Some readers of Kant take him to hold a view of this sort (cf. Brandom 2009; Leech 2010; Landy 2015). Hegel, at least, however, maintains that Kant’s debunking criticisms do not target the concepts themselves, but extrinsic misapplications of those concepts. He writes, for instance, that although Kant’s criticism helps to pave the way for a criticism of given concepts “in regard to their *content*,” he nevertheless falls into a view “according

to which their defect is supposed to be, not what they are in themselves, but only that they are subjective” (Hegel 1969: 190).⁵ To evaluate the significance of Kant’s argument for Naïve Analysis, therefore, I will approach that argument by way of Hegel’s critical reconstruction of it.

42. Hegel celebrates the skeptical arguments of Kant’s Antinomies as the real source of “the downfall of previous metaphysics” (190). This is because he locates in the Antinomies the germ of the idea that concepts themselves give rise to inconsistencies, and can thus be subjected to rational scrutiny just in terms of their content. However, Hegel objects to three aspects of Kant’s treatment of the Antinomies. I have already introduced the first of these: Hegel claims that Kant’s diagnosis of the source of the Antinomies remains too subjective. Against Kant’s thesis that the Antinomies arise because philosophers incorrectly apply concepts suited only to the objects of human experience to the things in themselves, Hegel suggests that we explain the “*necessity of the contradiction*” directly in terms of the “nature of thought determinations” (56). That is, he proposes that we look for the source of the Antinomies in the contents of our concepts themselves.

43. The second objection Hegel raises concerns Kant’s strategy for resolving the Antinomies. Kant proposes that we limit the range of applicability of those concepts that give rise to inconsistencies. In particular, he proposes that we restrict their application to the appearances. Hegel points out that this solution is a bit *ad hoc*. Although it avoids contradictions in practice, the concepts themselves (not having undergone any change in content) remain the same, and thus possess the same potential for giving rise to contradictions. As Hegel writes in the *Science of Logic*, this again has “no other result than to make the so-called conflict into something *subjective*,” though “it

⁵ Michael Forster argues that Hegel’s interpretation holds naturally only of Kant’s Third and Fourth Antinomies (i.e. the so-called “Dynamical Antinomies”). See Forster (1989, p. 177).

remains still the same illusion, that is, is as unresolved, as before” (191). Thus, Hegel claims that Kant’s proposed strategy for resolving the Antinomies stops short of actually resolving the issue.

44. Hegel proposes that, given any contradiction of the sort Kant examines, it is possible to identify a single, revised form of the concept under consideration that resolves the relevant inconsistency. This sort of revision differs from the coherence-maximizing activity of Naïve Analysis in part because it does not treat a concept’s nominal definition—the set of truisms with which strict analysis begins—as inviolable. I will discuss a modified version of this proposal, in the form of Rational Explication, in the final part of this chapter.

For now, it is essential only that Hegel sees the skeptical problems identified by Kant not as stopping points for inquiry, but as invitations to conceptual reform. Thus, he writes that Kant “commits the mistake of thinking that it is reason which is in contradiction with itself,” and “does not recognize that the contradiction is precisely the rising of reason above the limitations of the understanding and the resolving of them” (46). Hegel takes his philosophy to correct this error.

45. The third dimension along which Hegel finds Kant’s treatment of the Antinomies inadequate is that it is insufficiently general. Kant only attempts to derive contradictions from a small subset of the concepts he examines in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He discusses exactly four Antinomies. Hegel, however, claims that “antimony is found not only in the four particular objects taken from cosmology, but rather in *all* objects of all kinds, in *all* representations, concepts, and ideas” (Hegel 1991b: §48 Re). On a somewhat deflationary reading, this claim suggests just that we subject all of our concepts to such scrutiny as will uncover contradictions wherever they do in fact exist.

As Hegel appreciates, this means employing the skeptical method Kant makes use of in the Antinomies in every domain of philosophical investigation, setting out to identify every case where our concepts generate inconsistencies in virtue of their meaning. Hegel writes that “[a]ncient skepticism did not spare itself the pains of demonstrating this contradiction or antinomy in every notion which confronted it in the sciences” (Hegel 1969: 191). As is clear from Hegel’s second complaint, however, this generalization of Kant’s skeptical method is not merely destructive in its ambitions, but—like all philosophical criticism—aims also at producing new accesses to the truth.

46. On Hegel’s revised presentation, Kant’s argument in the Antinomies just illustrates that we cannot presuppose, like the practitioner of Naïve Analysis does, that our concepts are consistent with themselves and one another in their objective content. That is, we cannot assume that the program of rendering our concepts maximally determinate will naturally coincide with the program of rendering them maximally coherent.

Incidentally, Leibniz—on whose caricature I have modeled the Naïve Analysis schema—already recognizes this possibility. In the course of strict analysis, more and more specifications are added to our working definition. These specifications may hang together consistently, but they may also enter into inconsistencies with one another. Thus, Leibniz writes that “having carried an analysis to completion, if no contradiction appears, then certainly the notion is at least possible” (Leibniz 1989a: 26). He goes on to present this as a criterion for distinguishing adequate from inadequate concepts, writing that “an idea is true when its notion is possible and false when it includes a contradiction” (26). Allowing that totally determinate concepts should admit of division into adequate and inadequate varieties already frustrates the purposes of Naïve Analysis.

47. Leibniz conceives of his test for distinguishing adequate from inadequate concepts in metaphysical terms. That is, he takes a concept to be inadequate just in case its determining predicates evince the sort of incompatibility whose realization, in the object, would amount to metaphysical impossibility. However, on grounds involving his commitment to the principle of sufficient reason—an issue I do not propose to enter into here—he also understands the sort of inconsistency that renders a concept inadequate in logical and semantical terms.

In the case of logical inconsistency, a concept is inadequate just in case it contains the predicates P and Q, where P is logically equivalent to not-Q. In the case of semantical inconsistency, a concept is inadequate just in case it contains the predicates P and Q, where the class of analytic consequences of P contains some R, and R enters into logical inconsistency either with Q, or with some S belonging to the analytic consequence class of Q. Setting Leibniz's modal metaphysics aside, I will evaluate concepts strictly in terms of logical and semantical consistency.

48. In what sense is the problem identified here a conservatism problem? There is one trivial sense in which it is. Naïve Analysis dogmatically presupposes that every concept will be coherent on its real definition. It fails to recognize that the truisms included under a concept's nominal definition may enter into logical or semantical inconsistencies with one another. Thus, Naïve Analysis is inappropriately conservative in its commitment to the in-principle coherence of real definitions.

There is another, less trivial sense in which this qualifies as a conservatism problem. Because Naïve Analysis assumes that all real definitions will be coherent, its interventions in our epistemic positions do not select against real definitions that contain inconsistencies. Thus, even on an infinite timeline, Naïve Analysis will preserve contradictions, both in our subjective grasp of the concepts (insofar as we just aim to arrive at the real definitions), and in the concepts

themselves. Naïve Analysis is inappropriately conservative, therefore, insofar as it preserves logical and semantical inconsistencies across analyses, failing to rectify our epistemic position.

49. I have not provided detailed reconstructions of Hegel's arguments for revising Kant. To do so would take me too far afield from the broader purposes of this chapter. My aim in telling this broad-strokes story has been to show that the method schema Marx goes on to criticize, Rational Explication—which in many ways approximates Hegel's proposed successor to Kant's method—is not itself naïve, but essentially tied up with the critical (i.e. enlightenment) program in philosophy. As I will argue, the basic principles of Rational Explication are introduced to resolve problems of the sort Kant and Hegel identify for Naïve Analysis.

1.4. Criticism as Rational Explication

50. I turn now to Rational Explication itself. My first aim, in this part of the chapter, will be to render Rational Explication clear enough in its principles that it can serve as the object of targeted criticisms by Marx. I also hope, however, to motivate the schema just enough to make clear why it is worth criticizing. Rational Explication corrects against the conservatism of Naïve Analysis. Like Naïve Analysis, however, Rational Explication is a perennial method in philosophy: it takes the work of philosophy to consist in bringing out truths that are already available to us, in principle, at the start of inquiry. It is also non-naturalistic (i.e. it does not rely in any way on the procedures of the empirical sciences), and rationalistic (i.e. it takes more adequate epistemic positions to emerge by necessity from their less adequate precursors). Thus, Rational Explication attempts to salvage a perennial, non-naturalistic, and rationalistic method in the face of Kant's challenge.

51. I claimed, above (cf. §1.2), that Marx incorrectly attributes Rational Explication to Hegel. In particular, he claims that Hegel's method corrects existing theories by (i) deriving from them "two contradictory thoughts," where (ii) "[t]he fusion of these two contradictory thoughts constitutes a new thought, which is the synthesis of them" (Marx and Engels 1976: 164). This is a rough characterization of Rational Explication, and a mischaracterization of Hegel's method.

52. Rational Explication is prospective, or forward-looking, in its application. Recognizing an inadequacy in our present epistemic position, we apply the method to correct that inadequacy, and in that way generate a meliorated successor situation. Hegel's method, by contrast, is retrospective, or backward-looking, in its application. Thus, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel claims that it is only in retrospect, once we have arrived at a rationally adequate framework, that "the succession of experiences through which consciousness passes is raised into a scientific progression" (Hegel 1977b: §87). In practice, we come by new discoveries "by chance and externally," guided by no one particular method (§87).⁶ From the perspective of our current framework, however, we can rationally reconstruct this history as though it were a purely *a priori* process of reasoning in order to demonstrate, *post factum*, the existence of a meliorative trend in the history of thought.

This retrospective angle is the source of Hegel's famous bit of poetry in the *Philosophy of Right*: "the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk" (Hegel 1991a: 23).

⁶ These discoveries may be arrived at by definite methods, but by methods different from the method Hegel advocates for in philosophy. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he writes that "[w]ithout the development of the sciences of experience on their own account [i.e., by their own methods], philosophy could not have advanced beyond the point that it reached among the ancients" (Hegel 1990: 113). Hegel's claim is that philosophy itself does not arrive at the discoveries that urge human civilization along; it simply identifies the progressive trend therein.

53. For this reason and others, many readers of Marx claim that he fails to understand Hegel (cf. MacGregor 1984: 184; Wood 1993: 435-41; Fine 2001; Levine 2012: 24-30). I will argue, however, that Marx's arguments are often not directed at Hegel's views *per se*, but at an independently defensible cluster of commitments he and his peers, for definite social and historical reasons, refer to by the name "Hegel." As Louis Althusser writes, "the Hegel who was the opponent of the Young Marx from the time of his Doctoral Dissertation was not the library Hegel we can meditate on in the solitude of [the current day]; it was *the Hegel of the neo-Hegelian movement*" (Althusser 1969c: 26). Marx's methodological arguments, therefore, do not reach Hegel—though they may be extensible such that they do. The more pertinent question, however, is whether the arguments succeed in reaching their real target: the Rational Explication schema.

54. The prospective interpretation of Hegel's method has its beginnings in the writings of Hegel's immediate followers (i.e. the so-called "Old Hegelians"). Odd remarks in Hegel's lectures seem to suggest a prospective use for his method. In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, for instance, Hegel writes that "the function of our own and every age" is "to grasp the knowledge which is already existing, to make it our own, and in so doing to develop it still further and to raise it to a higher level" (Hegel 1983: 3). Conservative Hegelians like Karl Ludwig Michelet, H. F. W. Hinrichs, and Eduard Zeller embrace this suggestion, proposing the transformation of Hegel's reflective owl into a lark of heaven rising from the earth toward the sun, a rooster announcing the dawning of a new day, and an eagle soaring ever higher into the sky (cf. Stuke 1963: 64-66).

The second generation of Hegelian epigones develops this suggestion further. In his *Prolegomena to Historiography*, August von Cieszkowski claims that, with Hegel, "[t]he absolute method is now attained, and this is the core of philosophy," but argues that "transformations in

philosophy are still to be expected,” and that “[t]he dissolution of the present standpoint will result as soon as we have grasped it clearly” (Cieszkowski 1983: 66). Likewise, in his satirical *Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist*, Bauer claims that, in Hegel, “[t]hat which is and that which should be are ... distinguished” (Bauer 1989: 128), and that Hegel ultimately “opposes everything firm and established” (129). By the time of Marx’s reflections on method, “Hegel” has come to refer, among the “Young Hegelians,” to this forward-looking Hegel.⁷

55. Thus, Marx’s criticism of Rational Explication is not a criticism of Hegel. It is, however, a criticism of “Hegel,” understood as a forward-looking distortion of Hegel, modeled closely (though in confused fashion) on Hegel’s writings. Accordingly, to reconstruct Rational Explication, I will draw on Hegel’s followers, but also (and more extensively) on Hegel himself. Appeal to the latter is necessary in particular because Bauer, Proudhon, and their associates tend to be over-vague in their account of Rational Explication. Hegel, despite his difficulty, is fairly exact. Thus, rendering the Rational Explication schema clear enough in its details to admit of targeted criticisms by a reconstructed Marx will require some appeal to Hegel’s finer-grained claims about method. This exercise in reading Hegel through the eyes of his future-minded followers will double as an explanation of how, given certain background assumptions, otherwise competent inquirers should arrive at the mistaken idea that Hegel endorses Rational Explication.

56. Unlike Naïve Analysis, Rational Explication is not committed (dogmatically or otherwise) to the claim that all of our concepts are in-principle coherent, in their objective contents. Following

⁷ In his *Anti-Dühring*, Engels writes that “[e]ven formal logic is primarily a method of arriving at new results, of advancing from the known to the unknown—and dialectics is the same, only much more eminently so” (Engels 1987: 125). Thus, he brings out the relation between treating logic prospectively and treating it as a tool.

Hegel's revision to Kant on the Antinomies, the advocate for Rational Explication accepts that not all nominal definitions are internally coherent. Some clusters of truisms, just by themselves, entail contradictions. Thus, Rational Explication proposes to reform not just our subjective grasp of our concepts, but the concepts themselves. In this process, nothing should be immune to criticism. Thus, even the truisms definitive of our concepts may be revised with the aim of generating a more consistent framework of concepts. This is what makes Rational Explication a method of explication, rather than a method of analysis: it modifies the objective contents of our concepts.

57. Robert Brandom presents a sketch of a position in philosophical methodology that closely resembles Rational Explication. In it, he describes the advantage of his proposed method of explication over the naïve procedures of analysis favored by many in the tradition:

the most important difference is that where analysis of meanings is a fundamentally *conservative* enterprise (consider the paradox of analysis), I see the point of explicating concepts rather than opening them up to rational *criticism*. The rational enterprise, the practice of giving and asking for reasons that lies at the heart of discursive activity, requires not only criticizing *beliefs*, as false or unwarranted, but also criticizing *concepts*. Defective concepts distort our thought and constrain us by limiting the propositions and plans we can entertain as candidates for endorsement in belief and intention. This constraint operates behind our backs, out of our sight, since it limits what we are so much as capable of being aware of. Philosophy, in developing and applying tools for the rational criticism of concepts, seeks to free us from these fetters, by bringing the distorting influences out into the light of conscious day, exposing the commitments implicit in our concepts as vulnerable to rational challenge and debate (Brandom 2001: 77-78).

Like Hegel, Brandom ultimately conceives of his method in backward-looking or retrospective terms (cf. Brandom 2019: 437-41). It follows that it is not Rational Explication. This passage, however, brings out the sense in which Rational Explication is a critical method for philosophy.

First, like Brandom's method, Rational Explication subjects our concepts to reform to avoid problems of conservatism. Brandom's suggestion that these problems involve the paradox of analysis will be my core concern in the next chapter. Second, like Brandom's method, the

explicative dimension of Rational Explication embodies a “rational criticism of concepts,” such that our decisions to use one or another concept are “vulnerable to rational challenge and debate.”

58. I have suggested (cf. §1.50) that Rational Explication divides into two moments. In the first moment, we set out to identify any inconsistencies in the concepts under explication. Call this the “debunking moment.” Like Naïve Analysis, Rational Explication, in its debunking moment, aims to generate what Strawson calls a “connective analysis” of our concepts (cf. §1.26).⁸ The practitioner of Rational Explication sets out to describe the web of relations into which our concepts enter, in order to bring out any inconsistencies between them. This just is strict analysis.

This connective approach, as pursued by both Naïve Analysis and Rational Explication, involves commitment to a kind of conceptual holism: a concept has its definite content only in virtue of its place in the network of concepts to which it belongs.

59. Given its commitment to conceptual holism, the minimal unit of analysis on Rational Explication—the finest-grained entity one analyzes with the method—is not the individual concept, but the total network of concepts. Hegel refers to such networks as “shapes of consciousness” (Hegel 1977b: §36; 1969: 53-54). I will hew to the more modern vocabulary, and refer to these as “conceptual frameworks.” On assumption of holism, arriving at a definition for a given individual concept requires that I also have some set of resultant definitions for every other connected individual concept. In this sense, talk of analyzing individual concepts and talk of analyzing entire conceptual frameworks is interchangeable: every individual concept in a

⁸ Incidentally, Hegel himself tends to use the term “analysis” to refer to reductive analysis. See Hegel (1991b, §33 Ad; 1977b, §32). Hegel’s method involves a very different procedure. See Hegel (1991b, §88 Re).

framework can stand in for all the rest, insofar as its contents reflect the broader configuration of logical and semantical relations constitutive of that framework as a whole.

Compare this to Hegel, who sometimes refers to individual concepts as “categories” (cf. 1969: 41) or “principles” (cf. 1991a: §124 Re) where they can instructively be taken to stand in for entire conceptual frameworks. He likewise refers to the corresponding frameworks, in metonymic fashion, by the names of their principles. Thus, in the *Phenomenology*, he refers to the epistemological framework on which knowledge just is acquaintance with sensible particulars as “sense-certainty” (1977b: §91); and in the *Philosophy of Right*, he refers to the political framework on which property relations are decided by agreement as “contract” (1991a: §71).

60. In the course of strict analysis, inconsistencies may or may not arise. Rational Explication retains Naïve Analysis’s coherence-based procedure of justification. It follows that, if a framework is revealed not to contain any inconsistencies, that framework is *ipso facto* rationally adequate. This circumstance will arise, however, only in the case of maximally refined frameworks. The more routine outcome, therefore, will be that some inconsistency or other does in fact arise.

61. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel argues that the <sense-certainty> definition of <knowledge> gives rise to inconsistencies. It attempts to ground <knowledge> in nonrepeatable, time- and place-sensitive ostensions of sense particulars. More exactly, <sense-certainty> defines <knowledge> in terms of <that which is here and now ostended>. Upon analysis, however, the advocate for <sense-certainty> is forced to admit that <that which is here and now ostended> applies to a whole host of objects (e.g. past and future ostensions, ostensions made in remote places, ostensions made by other inquirers, and so on). Thus, <sense-certainty> claims that knowledge is grounded in

particularity (i.e. in particular episodes of ostension), but it ultimately grounds knowledge in the universal <that which is here and now ostended>. As Hegel points out, the defender of <sense-certainty> ends up “say[ing] the direct of opposite of what they mean” (1977b: §110). That is, <sense-certainty> itself entails both P and Q, where Q is semantically incompatible with P.

Likewise, in his *System of Economical Contradictions*, Proudhon argues that the simple definition of <economic value> as that in virtue of which something is both useful and exchangeable gives rise to an “antinomy” of the sort “analysis discovers at the bottom of every simple idea” (Proudhon 1888: 84). In particular, strict analysis leads to the result that what is most valuable in the sense of being the most useful (because most abundant, and therefore most ready to hand) is also least valuable in the sense of being least exchangeable (because least scarce, and therefore least sought after). Proudhon concludes from this not that something has gone awry in his analysis, but that the *analysans* itself amounts to a “contradictory idea of value” (83).

62. Having identified an inconsistency, the practitioner of Rational Explication moves on to the second of the two moments identified above. In this second moment, we transform our inconsistent concept into a more consistent one. Thus, Bauer writes that “every knowledge not only develops a new form, but a new content as well” (Bauer 1989: 127). Call this the “vindicating moment.”

In its debunking moment, Rational Explication transforms our epistemic position by bringing our subjective grasp of our concepts more in line with their objective contents. It does this through strict analysis, and thus by drawing out the necessary (i.e. analytic) consequences of our existing grasp of the concepts. In its vindicating moment, Rational Explication cannot proceed by analytic inference. Hegel, however, takes the reform of concepts still to proceed by necessity (cf. Hegel 1991b: §15, §24 Ad 3, §88 Re). It follows that the procedure by which we reform our

concepts, on Rational Explication, must be both necessary and non-analytic. Like Leibniz's model of analysis, therefore, it will involve both apodictic certainty and ampliative invention (cf. §1.24). It belongs to the class of inferences Kant calls "synthetic *a priori*" (Kant 1998: A10/B23).

Accordingly, Hegel writes in the *Philosophical Propaedeutic* that "[t]he development of what is contained in the Concept, Analysis [i.e., what I am calling "explication"], is the evolution of different determinations which are contained in the Concept but are not as such immediately given, and for this reason the procedure is at the same time synthetical" (Hegel 1986: 122). Since Rational Explication takes more adequate successor concepts to fall out of their less adequate predecessors by necessity, it follows that successor concepts are in some sense contained within their predecessors. Thus, Rational Explication is a perennial method: it takes the truth to be already contained, in confused form, as some sort of necessary consequence, in our starting position.

63. I will call this special, synthetic *a priori* mode of inference "explicative inference." Its role in Rational Explication corresponds, roughly, to the role played by so-called "dialectical transitions" or "dialectical logic" in the writings of Hegel and his follower. I will avoid the vocabulary of "dialectic" in most of what follows, for the reason that it invites an unwelcome atmosphere of mystery. This mysteriousness might seem to inhere in the very idea of a mode of inference that is at once necessary and ampliative. The fact that Rational Explication relies upon explicative inference to improve our epistemic positions will immediately disqualify the method if we cannot render explicative inference itself somewhat plausible. In order to motivate why Rational Explication is worth criticizing, therefore, I will try to motivate explicative inference a bit.

64. First, let us return to our earlier examples. After identifying the inconsistency entailed by the <sense-certainty> definition of <knowledge>, Hegel directly infers its successor—the <perception> definition of knowledge—according to which knowledge consists in the cognition of particular objects distinguishable only by the sets of universals (i.e. properties) they realize. He justifies this inference by the claim that <perception> “preserves [from <sense-certainty>] its immediacy, and is itself sensuous,” but resolves the predecessor definition’s confusion of particularity and universality by defining the sensuous element itself “as a universal, or as that which will be defined as a *property*” (1977b: §113). Thus, Hegel argues that <perception> entails all the useful consequences of <sense-perception>, while eliminating the latter’s inconsistencies.

Likewise, after analyzing two antithetically opposed conclusions out of the classical definition of <economic value>, Proudhon goes on to infer from these conclusions “a compound possessed ... of all their positive properties, and divested of all their negative properties” (Proudhon 1888: 105). He argues that his reformed definition of <economic value> as the portion of a society’s total labor that has been invested in a given item follows necessarily from this antithesis, because (i) it no longer entails that antithesis; and (ii) it does still entail all of the useful consequences of the previous definition. Moreover, “these properties acquire a broader, more regular, truer significance than before” (104). That is, consequences that appeared as arbitrary constants on the previous framework (e.g. variation in value over time) are shown, on the successor framework, to be explainable directly in terms of the nature of economic value.

65. We might make sense of the above examples, and explicative inference in general, by supposing that it is rationally necessary, whenever one encounters an inconsistency in thought, to move one’s game piece (so to speak) to the next available position. Most philosophers accept

something like this rule in practice. Thus, noticing that the claim P (which I have uttered) entails a contradiction, you might say “No, you cannot say that P. It entails both R and not-R. Instead, you will have to say that Q,” where Q is a claim that approximates P as closely as possible without generating the same rationally intolerable consequences. The necessity of explicative inference, then, will just be the necessity of the “have,” above, in “you will have to say that Q.”⁹

66. Consider the following, broadly Kantian account of the necessity at issue here. Suppose that the following two norms are constitutive for rationality: (i) never countenance a contradiction; and (ii) when forced to modify your commitments, modify them in whatever way will leave your total commitment set as similar as possible to its previous configuration. This latter constraint is a rationalistic variation on Quine’s “maxim of minimal mutilation” (Quine 1986: 7, 85).

Note that (ii) will not always lead us to make the fewest possible modifications to our commitments. Suppose that I discover a contradiction between two very low-level commitments (i.e. commitments with numerous downstream consequences for my conceptual framework). It may be necessary to make a number of small modifications to my framework in order to avoid dropping or replacing either of these major commitments. Dropping one or the other will involve less direct modification of my conceptual framework, but it will eventuate in more downstream changes to my commitment set (e.g. all of the higher-level commitments that hang on these two lower-level commitments). If these rules are constitutive of rationality, it follows that, at every epistemic position, I must infer to that epistemic position which (i) avoids any contradictions

⁹ This account of what goes on in explicative inference mirrors Forster’s interpretation of Hegel’s dialectical transitions. Forster writes that “the ‘necessity’ of a transition from a shape of consciousness A to a shape of consciousness B just consists in the complex fact that while shape A proves to be implicitly self-contradictory, shape B preserves shape A’s constitutive conceptions/concepts but in a way that modifies them so as to eliminate the self-contradiction, and moreover does so while departing less from the meanings of A’s constitutive conceptions/concepts than any other known shape which performs that function” (Forster 1998: 186; and cf. 1993: 146-49).

present on my current position; and (ii) retains as much as possible of my current commitment set. Explicative inferences are necessary, therefore, relative to the constitutive norms for rationality.

67. This Kantian account agrees, roughly, with things Bauer says about Rational Explication. He argues, for instance, that once “[p]hilosophy becomes the critic of the established order,” distinguishing “what is” (i.e. our current epistemic position) from “what should be” (i.e. the position to which explicative inference leads), then “only the *should* is true and justified, and must be brought to authority, domination and power” (Bauer 1989: 128). Moreover, moving to a more adequate conceptual framework by explicative inference makes us “radically free” (127-28) relative to the constraints of the previous conceptual framework (cf. Moggach 2003: 45-47).

Setting Bauer’s hyperbolic rhetoric aside, we can scent here the idea that the necessity of explicative inference derives from the necessity of conforming to constitutive rational norms. We might reject this account of rationality out of hand, but I take the explanation to rid explicative inference of its mysteriousness. On this account, the apparent extravagance is of the same sort that accrues to many technical ideas in philosophy when viewed outside of their proper context—like that which accrues to David Lewis’s modal realism, or to Saul Kripke’s theory of rigid designators.

68. Why not pursue a less theoretically costly procedure for reforming our concepts? The necessary character of explicative inference ultimately does Rational Explication a service. I introduced the Continuity Problem above (cf. §1.31), characterizing it as the problem of showing why individuals occupying an epistemic position A should move to the epistemic position A’, recommended by some philosophical method, when that transition might be taken to constitute an irrational change

of topic. To resolve the Continuity Problem, we have to show how answers framed from A' are rationally continuous with, and thus rationally responsive to, questions formulated at A.

69. Methods like Rational Explication that propose to revise the objective contents of our concepts are subject to an especially pointed version of the Continuity Problem.

In a paper often cited in recent methodology debates, Strawson suggests that dissolving a typical philosophical problem by replacing received concepts by successor concepts selected for improved rational adequacy “is not to solve the typical philosophical problem, but to change the subject” (Strawson 1963: 506). Moreover, it “is to do something utterly irrelevant—is a sheer misunderstanding, like offering a text-book on physiology to someone who says (with a sigh) that he wished he understood the workings of the human heart” (505). Because Rational Explication abandons Naïve Analysis’s restriction on concept change (i.e. its guarantee that every *analysans* will retain the nominal definition of its *analysandum*), it risks reforming our concepts in ways that not only revise our understanding of the topic at hand, but fundamentally change the topic.

70. Rational Explication’s response to the Continuity Problem is grounded in the necessary character of explicative inference. It mirrors the answer given by Naïve Analysis. Thus, suppose I have subjected your definition A of the concept <appetite> to Rational Explication (i.e. I have subjected your entire conceptual framework to explication). Through strict analysis, I have identified a contradiction in your framework, and in order to resolve that contradiction, I have fundamentally revised your definition of <appetite>, generating a new definition A’.

I can resolve any worries you may have about the rational continuity of A and A’ by showing that A’ follows by necessity, by explicative inference, from A. This shows that, if you

hold A you must adopt A', despite its differences from A, on pain of irrationality. This is Rational Explication's formal mode response to the Continuity Problem. Rational Explication resolves the Continuity Problem by arguing that responses employing A' can intelligibly answer questions framed in terms of A because A' is in some sense contained already within A. Now, the sense in which A' is contained within A differs from the sense in which *analysantia* are contained within their *analysanda* on Naïve Analysis. There, the containment is analytic. Here it is necessary, but non-analytic: containment as explicative consequence; but in either case, A' is contained in A.

71. Naïve Analysis's solution to the Continuity Problem is so powerful that it makes the problem look like a piece of philosophical confusion. Perhaps because (i) the conceptual difference between A and A' is greater; and (ii) because of the ampliative character of explicative inference, the problem retains more of its punch on Rational Explication's solution (cf. §1.32). The two solutions, however, are the same. Each establishes what I will call "discursive continuity" between predecessor concept and successor: each shows that the successor follows necessarily from its predecessor, such that, on reflection, anyone accepting the one must also accept the other.

72. In the material mode, we can distinguish three levels of conceptual content at play in Rational Explication. First, we each have our own subjective representations of the contents of our concepts. Second, our concepts, as they exist right now, have objective contents, such that our subjective representations can be right or wrong. Like Naïve Analysis, Rational Explication aims to bring our subjective grasp of our concepts in line with their objective content. However, it also introduces a third dimension. For every concept, there is some content that it should have, whether or not it does in fact have that content. This ideal content just is the maximally refined content, containing

no inconsistencies, that emerges, in the fullness of time, on the iterative application of Rational Explication. Thus, Rational Explication's material mode response to the Continuity Problem is that questions framed in terms of predecessor concepts admit of answers framed in terms of their successor concepts because these latter just are the concepts the predecessors ought to be.

73. We might also frame the above point in teleological language, and say that, on Rational Explication, predecessor concepts stand to their successors as the acorn stands to the oak. To say this just is to say that to be maximally adequate, and thus represent things rightly, is the robust success condition for being a concept. In some sense, my predecessor concept already is that maximally refined successor concept that follows by explicative consequence, but immaturely.

Just as Plato and Leibniz's metaphysics of forms undergirds the material-mode expression of Naïve Analysis's solution to the Continuity Problem, Hegel's metaphysics undergirds the material-mode expression of Rational Explication's solution. Thus, Hegel claims in the minor *Logic* that "the Concept is what truly comes first, and things are what they are through the activity of the Concept that dwells in them and reveals itself in them" (Hegel 1991b: §163 Ad 2). In Hegel, the substantial relationship between philosophical method, and the metaphysics that functions to explain and rationalize it, is made explicit. Thus, Marx claims that "metaphysics—indeed all philosophy—can be summed up, according to Hegel, in method" (Marx and Engels 1976: 161).

74. The procedure of discovery recommended by Rational Explication—explicative inference—amounts to what is called "immanent" or "internal" criticism. The practitioner of Rational Explication begins from the epistemic position of their interlocutor, and guides that interlocutor, step by step, by a finite series of necessary inferences, to a fundamentally new position, dissolving

the old position into the new. This immanent character of Rational Explication just marks its commitment to discursive continuity: the explicative inference procedure oversteps the Continuity Problem by deriving successor frameworks directly (i.e. immanently) from their predecessors.

Hegel describes his own commitment to this style of argument in the *Science of Logic*, arguing that the criticism of a philosophical system must “not proceed from assumptions lying outside the system in question and inconsistent with it,” but must rather “penetrate the opponent’s stronghold and meet him on his own ground” (Hegel 1969: 580-81). This operation is called “immanent critique” already by Hegel’s immediate followers (cf. Rosenkranz 1840: 161).

75. Rational Explication, therefore, retains from Naïve Analysis its procedure of justification. Both methods suppose that a rationally adequate framework or theory just is a maximally consistent framework or theory. Rejecting Naïve Analysis’s dogmatic commitment to the in-principle coherence of the objective contents of all received concepts, however, Rational Explication drops Naïve Analysis’s strict-analysis-based procedure of discovery. It retains strict analysis in a debunking role, but adopts explicative inference as a vindicating counterpart. Thus, on Rational Explication, we subject predecessor concepts to strict analysis in order to uncover their defects, then correct those defects by bringing out rationally meliorative, minimally mutilative successors through explicative inference. Rational Explication takes strict analysis and explicative inference together as its procedure of discovery, but explicative inference is its primary feature.

76. Rational Explication’s answer to the Continuity Problem—that successor concepts stand in discursive continuity with their predecessors, because they fall out of the latter as necessary consequences—makes it a perennial method in philosophy. Like other perennial methods, it takes

the truth to be available to us, in principle, at the very start of inquiry, separated from us only by the appropriate sequence of explicative inferences. Explicative inference is an ampliative mode of inference, but it is not the sort of procedure drawn upon by empirical scientists. It follows that Rational Explication is also a non-naturalistic method. Moreover, explicative inferences are necessary inferences. Thus, Rational Explication holds that we can arrive at the truth just by relying only on the inbuilt machinery of human reason. It is therefore also a rationalistic method.

Rational Explication retains the basic outlook and aim of the pre-critical methods (i.e. the “old metaphysics”) rejected by Kant, but adopts a sophisticated procedure for resecuring that aim.

Chapter 2 – Conceptual Accommodation and the Paradox of Analysis

1. Having laid out the basic principles of Rational Explication, I move now to reconstruct Marx’s early criticism of the schema. Marx first formulates the argument I will underscore here—what I call his “Accommodation Argument”—in his *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, and later revisits it in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter (cf. §1.7), Marx’s argument turns on the claim that “despite all its invectives against dogmatism,” the Rational Explication method schema “condemns itself to dogmatism” (Marx and Engels 1975b: 20). At the heart of Rational Explication is its rejection of such conceptual conservatism as would reproduce, in the *explicans*, the same inconsistencies the schema identifies, through strict analysis, in the *explicandum*. Though Rational Explication succeeds in eliminating the particular conservatism problem that haunts Naïve Analysis, the Accommodation Argument suggests that it inadvertently introduces a new conservatism problem of its own: it preserves our empirical commitments across explications.

2. Marx actually develops two closely related arguments against Rational Explication in his early reflections on method. Both involve a charge of conservatism. The first (and better known) of these concerns the practical irrelevance of Rational Explication, and every other strictly philosophical method, for improving the world. Marx points out, for instance, that explicating our concept of <state> does nothing to change the real-world shape of the state. To abolish undesirable features of the state, it is not enough to reform our concepts, for this abolishes them “as with Hegel, merely in thought” (1975a: 48, and cf. 343). Thus, Marx charges the advocate for Rational Explication with practical conservatism, suggesting that their procedures do nothing to change the world.

3. Marx's second conservatism argument, however, concerns the inappropriate retention of cognitive commitments across changes to our epistemic position. Thus, it charges Rational Explication with a species of cognitive conservatism. I call this argument the "Accommodation Argument" because Marx refers to the conservatism involved as conceptual "accommodation" (cf. Marx 1975: 84; Marx and Engels 1975a: 39, 95, 116; 1977b: 496; 1985: 33).

Marx's use of the term "accommodation" relates to the so-called accommodationist tradition in jurisprudence. According to Martha Nussbaum, the accommodationist holds that, when laws made by (religious) majorities pose a special burden to the consciences of minority-group individuals "a special exemption, called an 'accommodation,' should be given to the minority believer" (Nussbaum 2012: 74). Where the retention or rejection of cognitive commitments is concerned, however, special accommodations of any sort (e.g. exempting religious beliefs from criticism) will run afoul of the philosophical critic's commitment to global rational scrutiny.

4. In Marx's historical milieu, "accommodation" is often used to refer to the related practice of political accommodation, by which the interests of old political powers are satisfied under new political arrangements, even (and especially) when the principles that define these new arrangements should preclude their satisfying such interests (e.g. when the interests of the past monarch are satisfied by a republican government). This is especially relevant in discussions of the Prussian estates system: under the Prussian estates, certain groups (e.g. lords, serfs, burghers, Jews) are afforded special legal burdens and privileges. After the collapse of the estates system around 1810, the question arises to what extent these burdens and privileges will be reintroduced, through more or less covert channels, under the new arrangement. "Accommodation," in this

sense, is less concerned with exceptions for minority groups, and more with the retention of what is old in what is new. Both cases, however, turn on the selective suspension of rational scrutiny.

5. In his Accommodation Argument, therefore, Marx claims that Rational Explication suspends rational scrutiny for select concepts. The concepts thus retained just are conceptual accommodations. In particular, Marx's argument purports to show that certain principles, taken for granted by Rational Explication, inadvertently produce this conservative outcome. In this, Marx builds upon two previous versions of the Accommodation Argument, as presented by Schelling in his *Berlin Lectures*, and by Feuerbach in his early confrontations with Hegel. I will discuss these early formulations of the argument in the first two parts of this chapter. In the third part, I will introduce Marx's formulation, and argue that his effort at stating the Accommodation Argument, though still flawed, is more successful than either Schelling or Feuerbach's attempt.

6. I have suggested (cf. §1.57), following Brandom, that the task of avoiding a too-strong principle of conservatism in philosophy relates, somehow, to the paradox of analysis. In the fourth part of the chapter, I will explore the close analogy between the conservatism problem faced by Naïve Analysis and the paradox of analysis. I will then show that the Accommodation Argument raises a similar problem for Rational Explication. To further establish the analogy, I will argue that, understood in terms of strict analysis, the paradox of analysis turns out to be a special case of the paradox of inference, and the dilemma raised by the Accommodation Argument turns out to be analogous to another special case of the paradox of inference. This analogy suggests a strategy for further generalizing the Accommodation Argument, bringing out the limitations of Marx's version.

2.1. Schelling's Accommodation Argument

7. In the first two parts of the chapter, I will discuss two earlier formulations of the Accommodation Argument. Here, I will begin with Schelling's formulation, in the *Berlin Lectures*. In the next, I will move on to discuss Feuerbach's version of the argument. Both stress the concept <God>. Both also target Hegel, and both, like Marx, have been accused of misrepresenting Hegel's views (cf. Cornehl 1969; Houlgate 1999). Accordingly, I will reconstruct both Schelling and Feuerbach's arguments, as far as possible, not as criticisms of Hegel, but as criticisms of Rational Explication.

8. In his *Berlin Lectures*, Schelling distinguishes between what he calls the "negative" and "positive" philosophies.¹ The negative philosophy involves a method like Rational Explication, on which concepts derived from ordinary usage are subjected to rational scrutiny and reform. This operation "removes and eliminates the mere contingences of that immediate content," and thus becomes "a critical science (every elimination is a critique), or, because it removes, ... become[s] a negative science" (Schelling 2007: 136). Thus, the negative philosophy is concerned with the rational criticism of concepts. Schelling holds that, in the course of criticizing our received concept of <God> in particular, the negative philosophy will eventually arrive at a definition of <God> as <being> or <nature> (i.e. the pure stuff out of which everything else in reality is constituted).

Schelling holds, however, that the negative philosophy concerns itself only with the contents of concepts. Like Leibniz, it distinguishes concepts that index possibilities from concepts that index impossibilities (cf. §1.46). It tells us nothing about the actual, about what really exists.

¹ Engels attended Schelling's lectures, and published three separate criticisms: "Schelling on Hegel" (Engels 1975: 181-87), "Schelling and Revelation" (189-240), and "Schelling, Philosopher in Christ" (241-64). This does not prevent either Engels or Marx from taking Schelling's ideas onboard. I will argue, over the course of this dissertation, that Marx often takes up ideas from figures (e.g. Schelling and Otto Friedrich Gruppe) about whom he has nothing good to say in print. This often owes to political differences, especially where these figures enter into disputes with Marx's allies of the moment (e.g. Hegel and Bauer, respectively).

9. The positive philosophy, by contrast, concerns itself with what is actual. It begins with <being> or <nature>, the culmination of the negative philosophy, and sets out to derive everything in existence from this one source. The result is a wildly ambitious (and sometimes absurd) metaphysics of nature that proposes to derive all of physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology, in their minutest details, from a single principle. As Schelling makes clear elsewhere, the ultimate aim of his metaphysics of nature is to explain the history of human thought naturalistically: “if it is the task of transcendental philosophy to subordinate the real to the ideal, it is, on the other hand, the task of the philosophy of nature to explain the ideal by the real” (Schelling 2004: 194).

With this in mind, Schelling issues the following promissory note concerning his positive philosophy: it will explain how being, through its development into a system of nature, produces human thinking, and, in time, gives rise to our less refined definitions of <God> (e.g. as creative, jealous, and personal). By showing that these concepts in fact refer to being or nature, understood as the first principle of reality, Schelling promises, he will “prove the divinity of that *prius* [i.e., being],” and thus prove “that it is God, and that *God* therefore exists” (2007: 180). Accordingly, Schelling proposes to give an etiological or genetic account of our received concepts of <God> along naturalistic lines, with the ultimate aim of vindicating those concepts.

10. Schelling’s *Berlin Lectures* criticism of Hegel, which I aim to reconstruct as a criticism of Rational Explication, turns on these distinctions. Schelling claims that it would be a mistake to identify Hegel’s method too closely with the negative philosophy, for “[t]he philosophy that Hegel present[s] is the negative driven beyond its limits: it does not exclude the positive, but thinks it has

subdued it within itself” (145). The problem, then, is that Rational Explication supposes that it can arrive at an adequate representation of reality just through the explication of concepts.

11. This charge actually involves two closely related lines of criticism. First, Schelling claims that, even if Rational Explication can arrive at perfect concepts, it does not have the means to determine which of these concepts are realized in actuality. He argues that “only experience, and not reason, can say that *that* which has been construed really exists” (131). Rational Explication goes wrong, therefore, in supposing that concepts, just by themselves, get us to knowledge of the world.

Schelling frames this point in terms of the ontological argument for the existence of God. According to the ontological argument, <God> is the concept of a perfect being; if <God> did not include <existence>, there is one perfection, at least, that it would lack; thus, <God> does contain <existence>, and God exists. Schelling claims that the advocate for Rational Explication employs this sort of reasoning in taking their maximally refined frameworks of concepts to describe reality. They suppose that, just because their concepts are perfect as concepts, they must also find purchase in non-conceptual reality. Schelling follows Kant in rejecting the idea that existence is a predicate. Yet, he holds with Kant that “in my financial condition there is more with a hundred actual dollars than with the mere concept of them” (Kant 1998: A599/B627). It follows that we require an *a posteriori* criterion for distinguishing what is actual from what is merely possible.²

² I will set this dimension of Schelling’s critique of Rational Explication to the side in what follows. Patrick Murray, however, has defended a reconstruction of Marx’s criticisms of Hegel and political economy almost entirely in terms of Schelling’s repurposing of Kant’s criticism of the ontological argument—though without any reference to Schelling (cf. Murray 1988: 34, 49-50, 59-60, 210-16). Efforts at tracing Schelling’s influence on Marx by way of Feuerbach have tended to stress this line of reasoning. See Frank (1992, Ch. 5) and G.E. McCarthy (1988, Ch. 3).

12. On the second line of criticism, Schelling claims that Rational Explication may not even be capable of generating adequate concepts by its own *a priori* criteria. This criticism turns on the claim that Rational Explication inadvertently commits itself to an excessive conservatism.

13. Schelling accepts a version of the story introduced in the previous chapter, on which Kant shows that uncritical methods like Naïve Analysis fail because they are too conservative (cf. §1.48). He claims that “the old metaphysics [takes] its objects from experience or everyday beliefs, for example, the concept of the human soul; the objects [are] *given*, and it [is] merely a question of finding the right predicates for them” (Schelling 2007: 118). Here, however, Schelling subtly revises Kant’s charge against Naïve Analysis. Kant criticizes Naïve Analysis for proposing to arrive at knowledge by analyzing the concepts that “inhabit our reason *a priori*” (Kant 1998: B23). Schelling, by contrast, takes these concepts to derive “from experience or everyday beliefs.”

Thus, Schelling introduces a new account of why Naïve Analysis takes up the particular concepts it does. For Kant, it is because these concepts, inadequate as they may be, are given to all human beings just in virtue of their possessing the human cognitive apparatus. For Schelling, these concepts are historical givens. Naïve Analysis simply takes up the concepts it finds in circulation, especially among philosophers. For a concept to be given, therefore, is just for it to be received.

14. Schelling also accepts the claim, introduced alongside Rational Explication, that Kant’s proposed solution to the conservatism problem plaguing Naïve Analysis fails because, though it limits the uses to which they can be put, it leaves these concepts unchanged in their contents (cf. §1.43). Thus, Kant denies any descriptive role to <God>, treating it instead as a regulative idea. Schelling claims, however, that Kant derives “even this highest idea really only from experience,

from tradition, from the widespread belief of humanity, in short, only as a given idea: he [does] not progress to this thought in a methodical manner” (Schelling 2007: 138). Kant’s solution is conservative, too, therefore, insofar as it fails to subject our received concepts to explication.

15. Schelling, however, holds that Rational Explication fails by these same lights. It introduces “an objective method” for arriving at “the highest and final concept,” such that the concept (i.e. <God>) is “not as with Kant ... merely *assumed* or *presupposed*” (138). However, though this produces “the illusion of a result opposed to that of the Kantian critique, ... when correctly understood the result [is] *entirely the same*” (138). Recall that explicative inference, the procedure of discovery embraced by Rational Explication, reforms concepts with the aim of maximizing their logical and semantical consistency (cf. §§1.63, 1.47). Schelling’s suggestion, therefore, is that optimizing the consistency of our concepts by explicative inference still leaves them somehow contingent in their contents (i.e. arbitrarily taken over from received tradition).

What prevents Rational Explication from arriving at truly adequate concepts? Schelling claims that “[i]n this philosophy, every consequence [is] justified by what ha[s] preceded it, but it [is] justified only as a mere *concept*” (Schelling 2007: 138). The idea is this: because it operates on concepts just as concepts, without monitoring or correcting for their correspondence to reality, Rational Explication is doomed to produce conservative cognitive outcomes (i.e. to retain errors across explications). This is Schelling’s Accommodation Argument.

16. This statement of the Accommodation Argument, however, is quite weak. First, it is not yet clear why Rational Explication’s tendency to reform concepts just in terms of internal criteria like logical and semantical consistency should necessarily produce conservative outcomes. Thus,

Schelling's formulation of the argument fails to make clear what component of the Rational Explication schema is under attack: its explicative inference procedure of discovery, or its coherence-based procedure of justification. Second, Schelling seems to take it for granted that some version of Rational Explication, operating just on concepts, does in fact produce adequate concepts. His own negative philosophy depends on a method of this sort to arrive at its definition of <God> as <being> or <nature>. He fails to make clear, however, how his favored counterpart method of explication will avoid the problem he tentatively identifies for Rational Explication.³

2.2. Feuerbach's Accommodation Argument

17. I turn now to Feuerbach's version of the Accommodation Argument.⁴ Marx erroneously treats Feuerbach as the original author of the Accommodation Argument, though he claims that Feuerbach's formulation of the argument is inadequate (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 338, 234). Feuerbach is notable for his criticism of Christian theology, and for his philosophical anthropology. These two elements are intimately connected. Though he criticizes Schelling's

³ Engels points this out in his criticism of Schelling. He claims that "[i]f the negative philosophy is without all reference to existence, 'there is no logical necessity' that it should not also contain things which do not occur in the real world" (Engels 1975: 236). This contributes to the conservatism of the negative philosophy. Engels goes on to claim that, in contrast to Schelling's Christianity, "[i]f now a Jew or Mohammedan accepts Schelling's premises in the negative science, he will necessarily have also to fashion for himself a Jewish or Mohammedan positive philosophy" (236). Engels charges that Schelling's negative philosophy, insofar as it operates just on concepts, will simply reproduce whatever input it is given. Thus, this method too is susceptible to the Accommodation Argument.

⁴ An exhaustive history of the Accommodation Argument would include discussion of Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, who develops a sophisticated version of the argument in his *Logical Investigations*, and reiterates it later in *The Logical Question in Hegel's System*. See Trendelenburg (1862 Ch. 3; 1843). From what little has been written on this topic in English, see Beiser (2013, pp. 59-68) and Fuller (2019, pp. 170-75). Trendelenburg argues that Hegel relies tacitly on uncritical empirical assumptions in the course of his *Science of Logic*. He claims that, while Hegel's sort of "abstract thinking" proposes to "ignore the image," it nevertheless "secretly makes it its vehicle" (Trendelenburg 1862: 48; my translation). This version of the Accommodation Argument differs from those developed by Schelling, Feuerbach, and Marx, but is notable for anticipating both (i) Marx's later arguments concerning the role played by images in shaping our frameworks, as reconstructed in Ch. 5; and (ii) Marx's later criticism of Hegel in the methodological introduction to the *Grundrisse*, turning on the distinction between the order of knowing and the order of being (cf. Marx 1986a, pp. 38-45). I omit further discussion out of concern for space.

distinction between negative and positive philosophy as leading to subjectivism (cf. Feuerbach 2012e: 84), Feuerbach also divides his philosophy across negative and positive dimensions.

18. The negative dimension of Feuerbach's philosophy consists in the criticism of Christianity. This includes criticism of the Holy Bible. In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach claims that "[t]he Bible ... contradicts reason, contradicts itself, innumerable times" (Feuerbach 1989: 211). He also sets out, however, to criticize those theological and philosophical theories whose purpose it is to smooth over Biblical inconsistencies. Feuerbach refers to such theories as "scholastic philosophy." He takes scholastic philosophy to be counterproductive in the main, claiming that "we find the same contradictions in the Bible as in Augustine, as in Catholicism generally," but that, on their scholastic presentation, these contradictions are "developed into a conspicuous, and therefore revolting existence" (265). Accordingly, Feuerbach is much concerned to bring out the inconsistencies of the scholastic philosophy, especially in its more sophisticated developments.

19. Feuerbach takes the concept <God> in particular to contain inconsistencies. He claims that "the objective essence of religion, the idea of God, resolves itself into mere contradictions" (236), for "[o]ne half of the definition is always in contradiction with the other half" (213). For instance, the Biblical God is sometimes held to possess sensible properties, and at other times held to possess no such properties. Feuerbach claims that believers resolve inconsistencies of this sort by retreating into imagination: "[o]nly the imagination solves the contradiction in an existence which is at once sensational and not sensational; only the imagination is the preservative from atheism" (203).

The contention here is that, though manifest contradictions (e.g. square circles) are not thinkable, they are, in some sense, imaginable. We can muster some image to stand in for the

inconsistent concept <square circle>, or for <God> defined as both perceptible and imperceptible. Instead of reflecting on our inconsistent concepts, we take solace in comparably stable images.

20. The scholastic philosophy, in turn, relies on these stable images in its theorizing. It treats them as analogical models of a sort, devising sophisticated rationalizations for the content of traditional Christianity in terms that invoke these imagined images, while papering over the logical and semantical inconsistencies that give rise to them. Thus, Feuerbach writes that, in the scholastic philosophy, “[t]hat which is only a matter of feeling ha[s] to be made a matter of reason” and “that which contradicts the understanding ha[s] to be made not to contradict it” (243). Epicycle theories of this sort temporarily vindicate the concept <God>, but also move further and further away from the original content of Biblical doctrine. In effect, the scholastic philosopher explicates <God>, preserving (with the help of an analogical model) what is stable in it, and rejecting what is not.

21. Feuerbach takes the scholastic program to find its highest expression in Hegel’s philosophy of religion. He claims that the “Hegelian philosophy is the last grand attempt to restore a lost and defunct Christianity through philosophy” (Feuerbach 2012d: 206). This high ranking owes, in part, to the fact that Hegel expressly understands himself as explicating <God>. Recall that this is a modified Hegel, interpreted as a forward-looking advocate for Rational Explication (cf. §1.55).

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel claims that the predicates of <God>, as defined by traditional theology, “fall into opposition and contradiction with each other ... and these contradictions remain unresolved” (Hegel 1988: 419). Hegel then moves, by something like explicative inference, to a successor framework on which these inconsistencies are resolved—and on which, incidentally, “God himself is the resolving of these contradictions” (413). Thus, Hegel

reforms the concept <God> such that it no longer refers to an entity or substance “one has before oneself as something objective” (144), but rather, abstractly, to the progressive trend of history itself, or, alternately, to its final cause. On this reading of Hegel, <God> is defined as the ideal configuration of ideas (and states of affairs) toward which history as a whole approximates.

One result of this definition is that explication, understood as the progressive refinement of concepts—and the scholastic philosophy in particular, understood as the progressive refinement of theological frameworks—contributes directly to bringing about spiritual awakening.

22. Feuerbach accepts Hegel’s criticisms of earlier scholastic philosophy. He claims, however, that Hegel’s concept of <God> retains, at a higher-order level, some of the same theoretical vices that plague less sophisticated concepts of <God>. I will reconstruct the details of Feuerbach’s strict analysis of Hegel in Ch. 4. For now, it is sufficient to recognize that Feuerbach takes Hegel’s concept of <God> to retain some theoretical vices. Adopting Rational Explication’s procedure of discovery, Feuerbach then moves, by explicative inference, to his proposed successor framework, on which <God> is defined in terms of <Man>.⁵ On Feuerbach’s definition, <God> is an abstract representation of the perfections the human species as a whole is capable of, but to which no

⁵ Readers familiar with Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* may suppose that he simply takes his new framework for granted, and that he criticizes the scholastic philosophy not by analyzing or explicating its concepts, but by explaining it away as an illusion. This conflates elements of Feuerbach’s negative and positive philosophies. It is a fair (and common) misunderstanding, however, given the order of presentation in *The Essence of Christianity*. Feuerbach begins by articulating his proposed successor framework (cf. Feuerbach 1989: Ch. 1), then proceeds to naturalistically debunk the scholastic philosophy from the perspective of that framework (cf. Chs. 2-18). Only afterward does he show his work, so to speak, by providing a strict analysis and explication of the central concepts of the scholastic philosophy (cf. Chs. 19-27). In the order of logical precedence, these later chapters come first.

Elsewhere, Feuerbach argues that his candidate framework can be arrived at only through the explication of Hegel’s philosophy of religion. He writes in his “Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy” that “[t]he direct, crystal-clear, and undeceptive identification of the essence of man—which has been taken away from him through abstraction—with man, cannot be effected [simply] through a positive approach; it can only be derived from the Hegelian philosophy as its *negation*; it can only be *apprehended* at all if it is apprehended *as the total negation* of speculative philosophy, although it is the *truth* of this philosophy” (2012c: 157; and cf. 2012a: 294; 2012d: §19).

individual human being can aspire. The resulting framework, including the concept of <Man> on which it all rests, just is Feuerbach's philosophical anthropology.

23. This philosophical anthropology also serves as the starting point for the positive dimension of Feuerbach's philosophy. He claims that "[t]he new and the only positive philosophy is the *negation of all scholastic philosophy*, although it contains the truth of the latter" (Feuerbach 2012c: 169), for "[o]ne need only make the conclusions of its analysis [i.e., the explication of Hegel's scholastic philosophy] into premises in order to recognise the principles of a positive philosophy" (170). Like Schelling, Feuerbach understands the positive philosophy in naturalistic terms. He begins with his revised concepts of <God> and <Man>, and sets out to explain how other, less adequate concepts of the same arise. Unlike Schelling, however, Feuerbach construes these naturalistic explanations as debunking explanations: by explaining less sophisticated concepts of <God> in terms of his refined definition of <God>, Feuerbach aims to establish the erroneousness of belief in God.

I will examine the details of Feuerbach's naturalistic debunking procedure, especially as it is later taken up by Marx, in the next two chapters. For now, I turn back to Feuerbach's claim that Hegel's rational theology inappropriately retains theoretical vices across explications from earlier scholastic philosophies. This is the location of Feuerbach's Accommodation Argument.

24. Feuerbach claims that, despite its ambition to criticize traditional theology, Hegel's "doctrine ... does not in fact contradict religion," or—more exactly—it "contradicts it only in the same way as, in general, a developed, consequent process of thought contradicts an undeveloped, inconsequent, but nevertheless radically identical conception" (Feuerbach 1989: 230). He claims,

therefore, that Hegel's explicated theology is radically identical with traditional theology. I take this to mean that some essential subset of principles is shared between the two frameworks.

25. The core principle shared between Hegel's rational theology and the traditional theology it explicates is commitment to a really existing God. Feuerbach claims that, in traditional theology, "[i]n order to make God free and independent of all that is human, he is regarded as a formal, real person" (227). On traditional theology, <God> is defined partly in sensible terms, as a really-existing entity capable of materially efficacious acts; and he is defined partly in non-sensible terms, as existing outside of space and time. On Hegel's framework, by contrast, <God> is no longer confusedly defined in terms of sensible existence. However, he is still defined as existing independently of humanity. In Hegel, <God> is identified with <thought>, which indexes the intelligible structure, processual development, and final purpose of reality.

26. Hegel allows that his philosophy holds commitments over from traditional theology. He rejects the idea that it should never do so as "the vanity of the understanding, which is displeased by the fact that philosophy still exhibits the truth in religion" (Hegel 1988: 489). In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he writes that a successor framework "contains what was true in the preceding knowledge," insofar as it follows by explicative inference from its predecessors (1977b: §87). In the *Encyclopaedia*, he characterizes as "ill-minded prejudice" the notion that philosophy is in any way antithetical to the "simple-hearted religion" it explicates, for the reason that such "shapes [of consciousness] are themselves recognised by philosophy, and even justified by it" (1991b: 5; brackets in original). They are justified, that is, just to the extent that their contents survive rational scrutiny, and are thus preserved in later frameworks.

27. Feuerbach claims, however, that Hegel retains his commitment to a really existing God even despite its inadequacy. It is clear that Feuerbach blames Hegel's method for this conservative outcome. In "The Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," he writes that

already in the most central principle of Hegel's philosophy we come across the principle and conclusion of his philosophy ... that philosophy, far from abolishing the dogmas of theology, only restores and mediates them through the negation of rationalism. The secret of Hegel's dialectic lies ultimately in this alone, that it negates theology through philosophy in order then to negate philosophy through theology. ... At first everything is overthrown, but then everything is reinstated in its old place, as in Descartes (Feuerbach 2012d: 206).

This is Feuerbach's version of the Accommodation Argument. Framed as a criticism of Rational Explication, the charge is this: there is some feature of Rational Explication in virtue of which its practitioners cannot but preserve contents across explications, whether or not those contents are ultimately adequate—and this despite its commitment to global rational scrutiny.

28. Unfortunately, Feuerbach's formulation of the Accommodation Argument, like Schelling's before it, is ultimately untenable. First, Feuerbach fails to identify what aspect of Hegel's method is responsible for generating conservative outcomes. In the above passage, he suggests that the problem arises because Hegel not only explicates traditional theology, but also explicates its secular successor framework (cf. 206). This simply pushes the problem back a stage. What is it about these successive explications that preserves or reproduces conservative commitments?

Elsewhere, Feuerbach seems to suggest that the problem resides in Hegel's reliance on the same analogical models employed by earlier frameworks (cf. 1989: 231). Yet elsewhere, he uses the word "contradiction" not in the sense of logical or semantical inconsistency, but referring to circumstances where a concept stands in "contradiction with the truth of the senses" (242), or in "contradiction with the natural sense and understanding" (190). This suggests that Rational

Explication may fail because it lacks empirical criteria for the adequacy of concepts (cf. 2012d: 238). Feuerbach is unclear, therefore, about what element in Rational Explication is responsible for generating conservative outcomes, and about what sorts of inadequacies it retains across explications (i.e. since it cannot, by definition, preserve logical or semantical inconsistencies).

29. Second, Feuerbach does not explain how his own method of explication (i.e. his negative philosophy), which, like Schelling's, very closely resembles Rational Explication's explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, is supposed to avoid the Accommodation Argument itself. Since Feuerbach proposes to derive the first principle (i.e. <Man>) of his positive philosophy from his negative philosophy, it follows that his philosophy may also be guilty of undue conservatism.

30. This second issue is especially troublesome for Feuerbach because he, too, claims to retain select elements from traditional theology. As Karl Löwith writes, Feuerbach's criticism, too, is at bottom "not a critical destruction of Christian theology and Christianity, but an attempt to preserve the essential part of Christianity" (Löwith 1967: 335). That is, while Feuerbach's criticism plays a debunking role relative to certain Christian doctrines (e.g. belief in a really existing God), it plays a vindicating role with respect to others. In particular, Feuerbach sets out to vindicate a definite subset of the normative claims defended by Christian theologians. He claims that morality, or "the moral duty of benevolence in the highest sense" is "what is best, what is true in Christianity—its essence purified from theological dogmas and contradictions" (Feuerbach 1989: 60).

31. Feuerbach distinguishes his own vindicatory project from the scholastic philosophy by the fact that contributors to the scholastic philosophy seek to vindicate the descriptive and ontological basis

of Biblical doctrine. Feuerbach, by contrast, seeks to retain only its normative import, scrapping the entire ontological base, and replacing it by a new, naturalized alternative. In this sense, Feuerbach shares much in common with contemporary moral naturalists, who attempt to show that it is possible to justify belief in objective moral truths without appeal to supernatural facts.

In fact, Feuerbach motivates his criticism of the scholastic tradition by the idea that their efforts to vindicate inadequate descriptive and ontological commitments from Biblical doctrine threatens to compromise the entire Christian framework, including its normative core. Thus, he claims that “*wherever religion places itself in contradiction with reason, it places itself also in contradiction with the moral sense*” (246). That is, Feuerbach warns that retaining the ontological base will result in the total abandonment of Christianity (cf. 200). He recommends his own second-order atheism, on which belief in a really existing God is abandoned, but the normative core of Christianity is retained, as insurance against this cruder, more threatening variety of atheism.

32. Let us review. Feuerbach’s argument against Rational Explication, and against the scholastic philosophy in particular, is that it falls into an unwarranted conservatism, retaining inadequate elements from past frameworks. His own philosophy, however, is also directed at retaining elements from the Christian tradition—salvaging those elements from elimination under criticism. There is no reason in principle that this configuration of commitments should turn out unsound, but Feuerbach requires some criterion for distinguishing the (apparently legitimate) retentions of his own method from the (apparently illegitimate) retentions of Rational Explication.

Feuerbach’s philosophy contains much of the raw material necessary to produce such a criterion, but he does not make the matter clear. In Ch. 3, I will show how Marx repurposes these

materials in his own early method for philosophy. Feuerbach's unclarity on this issue is mirrored in the unclarity of his formulation of the Accommodation Argument.

2.3. Marx's Accommodation Argument

33. Marx is aware of the shortcomings in Feuerbach's statement of the Accommodation Argument. He writes in the *1844 Manuscripts* that "what Feuerbach designate[s] as the positing, negating, and reestablishing of religion or theology" in Hegel's philosophy of religion "has to be expressed in more general terms" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 339), and also stands in need of further "*proof*" (234). Marx's efforts to clarify the matter culminate in his own statement of the Accommodation Argument. My aim, in this part of the chapter, is to reconstruct this argument in its clearest form.

34. Unlike Schelling and Feuerbach, Marx is not principally interested in the criticism of theology, or the concept <God>. He writes in the published introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* that, while the "criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism," in that it frees us up from the constraints of theological tradition, making a global criticism possible for the first time, "the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 175).

Accordingly, Marx turns to other objects of criticism. This is one sense in which he proposes to reframe Feuerbach's Accommodation Argument in "more general terms." In the *Contribution* itself, Marx criticizes Hegel's explication of <state> on the grounds that it inappropriately holds ideas over from medieval thinking on right governance. He calls this "accommodation" and "the worst kind of syncretism" (95). In a later article for the New York Tribune, Marx complains that Hegel's explication of <state> treats capital punishment as an

ineliminable feature of human society, claiming that “German idealism here, as in most other instances, has but given a transcendental sanction to the rules of existing society” (1979: 496).

35. More recent readers have pointed to other cases of accommodation in Hegel (cf. Pateman 1988: 176-77; Wood 1990: 93; Mills 1997: 94; McCarney 2000: Ch. 9). Thus, we might also count Hegel’s claim, elsewhere in the *Philosophy of Right*, that “[w]hen women are in charge of government, the state is in danger, for their actions are based not on the demands of universality but on contingent inclination and opinion” (Hegel 1991a: §166). This is, in part, Hegel claims, because women are more like plants than like animals. And we might count his paired claims, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, that “Negroes are to be regarded as a nation of children,” and that it is only “in the *Caucasian* race that mind first attains to absolute unity with itself” (2007: §393).

Claims of this sort read as accommodations for the following reasons: (i) they embody commitments we know, in ordinary life, to be inherited prejudices; (ii) we take their cognitive inadequacy to be fairly manifest; but (iii) they are nevertheless afforded a necessary or rational role in Hegel’s conceptual framework. These are the sorts of qualities that warn of accommodation.

36. An effective criticism of the Rational Explication schema, however, will have to do more than describe individual instances of accommodation discoverable in the writings of a single (ostensible) advocate for the method. It should account for the in-principle tendency of Rational Explication to generate such outcomes. Thus, Marx also proposes to identify an additional “proof” of the Accommodation Argument, where this proof just consists in an explanation of how Rational Explication in fact tacitly commits itself to its excessive conservatism.

37. In the absence of any such account, we are inclined to explain the phenomenon of conceptual accommodation in terms of the private failings of individuals. Thus, we might explain Hegel's uncritical claims about women in terms of his personal misogyny, and his uncritical claims about race in terms of his personal racism or European chauvinism. Marx argues that this strategy is unhelpful. Already in the notes for his dissertation, he rejects any effort to "explain one or the other determinations of [Hegel's] system by his *desire* for accommodation," thus any effort to "explain it [i.e., conceptual accommodation] in terms of *morality*" (Marx 1975: 84; first emphasis mine).

Hegel may well have been a lifelong adherent to the Christian faith, and he may well have been a European chauvinist. The purpose of criticism, however, is to correct against the arbitrary biases of individual inquirers. If a given explication satisfies the strictures of Rational Explication (i.e. if it is a successful deployment of the Rational Explication schema), but also shows signs of accommodation reflecting personal bias, this is evidence of the inadequacy of Rational Explication itself, as a method. Marx recommends, therefore, that we turn away from criticism of the "particular conscience of the philosopher" (85), and turn instead to criticism of philosophical methods, such that "progress of conscience is at the same time progress of knowledge" (84).

38. Marx suggests that the conservative tendency of Rational Explication arises in relation to its "reduction" or "dissolution" of predecessor frameworks into their successors (Marx and Engels 1975a: 96). I will favor the term "dissolution" in what follows, to avoid confusing the sort of reduction at issue here with more familiar notions in metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

What is it to dissolve one framework into another? When, on Rational Explication, we move by explicative inference from a given predecessor framework to its successor framework, we license a definite change in our talk about the world. Say that we explicate traditional theology

in terms of Hegel's rational theology. For every concept in the dissolution target (i.e. traditional theology), there is a corresponding successor concept in the dissolution base (i.e. Hegel's framework). Having carried off the explication, we commit ourselves to the idea that the dissolution base is more adequate to reality than its dissolution target. As Marx puts it, we accept that religion as represented on Hegel's rational theology is "the sole true existence of religion" (340). Framing the point a bit more exactly, we hold that when we talk about God in the conceptual vocabulary of traditional theology, what we are really talking about, in each instance, is God as described in the conceptual vocabulary of Hegel's rational theology. The vocabulary of traditional theology now figures just as a confused approximation to Hegel's more refined vocabulary.

39. There is a sense, therefore, in which dissolution functions to debunk or subvert the dissolution target. Traditional theology is no longer independently viable as a descriptive vocabulary once it has been dissolved into Hegel's rational theology. There is another sense, however, in which the dissolution of a given framework serves actually to vindicate that framework.

40. When we dissolve traditional theology into Hegel's rational theology, we do not disqualify the claims of traditional theology. Instead, we hold that those claims are comprehensible only once translated into the vocabulary of Hegel's dissolution base. Thus, the original claims are given "a different significance" than they had previously, but are still "expressed as rational" (9), in the sense that they are taken to possess, as their true content, intelligible claims about reality.

Thus, Marx points out that, in Rational Explication, a "peculiar role ... is played by the act of *superseding* [i.e., through explication] in which denial and preservation, i.e. affirmation, are bound together" (339). The point becomes clear when we recall that, on Rational Explication,

successor frameworks follow from their predecessors by necessity of explicative inference (cf. §1.70). It follows that, in possessing traditional theology, I also possess Hegel's rational theology, so long as that framework does in fact follow from its predecessor by explicative inference. There is a sense in which our dissolution target, therefore, is always preserved, insofar as it is taken to contain, already, as explicative consequence, the full content of its successor and dissolution base.

41. There is also a more concrete sense in which Rational Explication preserves contents across explications. On any token application of the Rational Explication schema (save in limit cases), some portion of the predecessor framework's definition set will be revised. That is, some subset of the individual principles constitutive of the definitions for each of the framework's individual concepts will be revised. Explicative inference, however, involves a kind of minimal mutilation constraint (cf. §1.66), such that it leaves our concepts as near to their original configuration as possible while resolving existing inconsistencies. It follows that every token Rational Explication will also always (save in limit cases) leave some subset of our definition set unchanged.⁶

42. Though it may not be clear from the perspective of the predecessor framework itself, from the perspective of the relevant successor, it is clear that some subset of the principles constitutive of the predecessor were destined to be preserved across explicative inference. Call the content that is preserved "core content." Core content is always determined relative to a given successor. Thus, relative to Hegel's rational theology, for instance, we might say that the principle, constitutive of

⁶ The relevant limit cases are these. A maximally consistent framework (i.e. a framework containing no inconsistent concepts) will undergo no change after explicative inference. On the other hand, a maximally inconsistent framework (i.e. a toy framework on which every concept is defined in terms of directly contradictory pairs of principles) will retain none of its contents across explicative inference. For this maximally inconsistent framework, the minimal mutilation constraint falls out, as the nearest possible modification of the framework that resolves every inconsistency is a successor framework sharing exactly no contents in common with its predecessor.

<God>, that God exists independently of humanity, is core content. Relative to Feuerbach's proposed successor framework, this principle is not part of traditional theology's core content.

There is more to a predecessor framework than its core content—namely, all those principles that are destined to be revised through explicative inference. There is also more to a successor framework than the core content it retains from its predecessor—namely, all those principles that are added in the course of revising the inconsistencies of the predecessor. In the limit, the core content of a framework is the content that is destined to be preserved no matter how many iterations of Rational Explication that framework's constitutive principles are exposed to.

43. Marx adds that, on Rational Explication, the core content of a framework is likely to include its empirical representational content. That is, it will often be the concepts that describe “[e]mpirical actuality” whose content is simply “accepted as it is” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 9). Why so? Because, as both Schelling (cf. §2.11) and Feuerbach (cf. §2.28) suggest, Rational Explication includes no criteria for testing a framework's empirical adequacy. The practitioner of Rational Explication cannot promise that explicative inference will never modify our empirical commitments. They may be modified in the course of explicative inference if their modification figures in the minimal mutilation necessary to eliminate observed inconsistencies. However, that practitioner cannot promise that our empirical commitments ever will be modified, either—for explicative inference targets for correction only logical and semantical inconsistencies.

44. Through Rational Explication, our less consistent frameworks are replaced by refined successors. It follows that we do not simply adopt received frameworks (e.g. frameworks embodying naïve empirical commitments). We dissolve those frameworks into more refined

successors. This is the critical attitude Rational Explication adopts toward received ideas. As Marx puts it (somewhat obscurely), through this dissolution, it comes to be that “[o]rdinary empirical fact has not its own but an alien spirit for its law” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 8). The true existence of the entities described by the received framework is accessible only from the refined framework.

Marx points out, however that “the form of existence of the actual idea [i.e., the refined framework into which the received framework is dissolved] is not an actuality evolved from itself, but [from] ordinary empirical fact” (8). The refined successor retains empirical commitments from its predecessor, as core content. Thus, we dissolve our received frameworks into dissolution bases that contain identical empirical commitments. We treat the empirical content of our received frameworks as mere “phenomenon”—as a mistaken theory of empirical actuality, standing in need of correction through Rational Explication—but then dissolve it into a dissolution base that “has no other content than this phenomenon” (9). The result is that Rational Explication smuggles uncritical empirical commitments across explications. This is Marx’s Accommodation Argument.

45. Thus construed, Marx’s Accommodation Argument turns on two distinct properties of the method. Both properties play a role in Schelling and Feuerbach’s versions of the Accommodation Argument. In Marx, however, the two become disentangled. First, Rational Explication lacks criteria for distinguishing less empirically adequate from more empirically adequate frameworks. It concerns itself only with logical and semantical consistency. Second, Rational Explication always imports some core content across explications. We might say that this second, formal feature is responsible for the conservatism of Rational Explication, while the first, material feature is responsible for the excessiveness or perniciousness of that conservatism.

Were it not for Rational Explication's failure to correct against empirical error, its retention of core contents across explications may not amount to an unwitting dogmatism, and thus may not run afoul of the fallibilistic precepts that motivate the critical program in philosophy (cf. §1.14).

46. Note that Marx uses the term "empirical" in a broad sense, to include not just claims about proper sensibles, but also claims about unobservable entities. This conception of the empirical is present already in Schelling, who countenances a "philosophical empiricism ... that maintains that the supersensible can become an actual object of experience" (Schelling 2007: 171). It is present also in Feuerbach (cf. Feuerbach 2012b: 137), and resembles the scientific realist claim that it is possible, once trained into the right theories, to directly see a positron in a Wilson cloud chamber.

Accordingly, Marx understands Feuerbach's charge that Hegel retains his commitment to an actually existing God across explication from traditional theology as a claim about the retention of a definite empirical content. Thus, he claims in the *1844 Manuscripts* that, "after superseding religion" through Rational Explication, the religious man "yet finds confirmation of himself in *religion as religion*" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 332). The suggestion is that, though Hegel dissolves traditional theology into his rational theology by Rational Explication, he nevertheless retains the core empirical content of traditional theology. Thus, Hegel's operation poses no real threat to traditional faith. By design, it leaves the entire empirical core of Christianity unchanged.

47. The question arises how Marx himself proposes to make sense of the empirical adequacy and inadequacy of conceptual frameworks. As I will argue in the next chapter, he inherits conceptual holism from Rational Explication (also cf. §1.58). This rules out some traditional solutions to the problem of empirical adequacy for concepts, as it means that Marx does not construe the structure

of concepts in truth-conditional or representationalist terms. I will also argue, in Ch. 4, that Marx cannot (and does not) rely on direct acquaintance with sensible things to distinguish empirically good from empirically bad concepts. This further limits his options.

48. Marx's conception of empirical inadequacy remains inchoate throughout much of his career. However, beginning with his early method, he makes continual tacit appeal to a criterion of empirical adequacy in terms of the explanatory power and explanatory coherence of a framework. I will reconstruct this criterion in Ch. 6, in connection with Marx's claim, in the "Theses on Feuerbach," that "[t]he question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 3). For now, I will leave Marx's conception of empirical inadequacy undefined. Until I define the criterion, however, I will employ the following fact as a guide: that Marx treats as more empirically adequate those frameworks that are better positioned to provide explanations of empirical phenomena, less likely to produce conflicting explanations, and more unified in their explanatory resources.

49. For present purposes, it should be enough to recognize that Rational Explication lacks the means to correct against representational error—whatever we take that to consist in. The schema fails to account for the possibility of disruptive presupposition failure. In cases of disruptive presupposition failure, one or more of the presuppositions of a judgment turn out false. This sort of failure is to be distinguished from catastrophic presupposition failure, on which a referring term's failure to refer renders the judgment in which it figures meaningless (cf. Yablo 2006). It is important, for the class of representational errors I am considering, that no such catastrophe arises. I understand quite well what Becher and Stahl are on about when they describe the role played by

phlogiston in combustion. I take all their claims about phlogiston to be disrupted (i.e. rendered false, even irrelevant), however, by the fact that there is no such substance as phlogiston.

Received frameworks may contain fundamental mistakes about the nature of things. Their ontologies may be wildly underpopulated, or wildly overpopulated. In such cases, and in the absence of any procedure for correcting against disruptive presupposition failure, the preservation of core contents across explication embodies a kind of dogmatism. Thus, Marx argues that “Hegel’s proof”—his (ostensible) deployment of the Rational Explication schema in generating improved successor frameworks—“is conclusive if one accepts the constitutional presuppositions, but by *analysing* [i.e., explicating] their basic notion, Hegel has not proved these presuppositions” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 36-37). In effect, Marx argues that Hegel’s proof is valid but unsound.

50. The retention of core contents across explications is essential, however, for Rational Explication’s solution to the Continuity Problem (cf. §1.69). It is only because successor frameworks are derivable from their predecessors by necessity of explicative inference that the modification of concepts effected by Rational Explication does not constitute an irrational change of topic. The core content preserved across explications just is the common subject matter passed on from one framework to the next. Thus, the same property of Rational Explication that renders it conservative in principle also secures its solution to the Continuity Problem: the discursive continuity of predecessor-framework questions with successor-framework answers (cf. §1.71).

51. In light of Marx’s Accommodation Argument, Rational Explication faces a dilemma at the formal level. The advocate for Rational Explication must either (i) drop the retention of core contents across explication, but also drop their discursive-continuity-based solution to the

Continuity Problem, rendering Rational Explication untenable for philosophy; or, alternatively, (ii) tolerate the possibility of conceptual accommodation—the preservation of empirically inadequate commitments across explications—allowing that their method is uncritical, even in principle, in the face of received prejudices, such as those described above (cf. §§2.34-35).

52. These considerations bring out the sense in which Marx’s Accommodation Argument targets Rational Explication as a method, rather than the individual conscience. Marx argues that “[t]here can ... no longer be any question about an act of accommodation on Hegel’s part *vis-à-vis* religion, the state, etc., since this lie is the lie of his principle” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 339). If the problem resides in the principles that circumscribe Rational Explication itself, we do not need to know anything about the conscience of the individual practitioner to diagnose token applications of Rational Explication as conceptual accommodations. If Marx’s Accommodation Argument holds water, Rational Explication produces conceptual accommodations in all but limiting cases.

53. This strategy of argument also proscribes efforts to explain a philosopher’s conceptual accommodations away in terms of the conservatism that comes with age. In face of the Young Hegelian attempt to salvage Hegel’s early works by explaining his late conceptual accommodation away in this fashion, Marx remarks that “despite its thoroughly negative and critical appearance and despite the genuine criticism contained in it,” the *Phenomenology of Spirit* contains already “as a germ, a potentiality, a secret, the uncritical positivism and the equally uncritical idealism of Hegel’s later works—that philosophic dissolution and restoration of the existing empirical world” (332). Thus, Marx holds that Rational Explication amounts to a kind of positivism: it takes as given

whatever empirical data it receives (e.g. in the contents of received concepts), and simply operates on top of that foundation.⁷ Whether the practitioner intends conservatism makes no difference.

It is worth reiterating, here, that Marx's criticisms of Hegel are directed against a systematic misrepresentation of Hegel, characteristic of Marx's intellectual milieu (cf. §1.55). The point stands, however, as an advertisement for the non-moralistic character of Marx's criticism.

54. Despite the central role it plays in shaping Marx's views on philosophical method, few readers of Marx have discussed his Accommodation Argument. One noteworthy exception is Galvano Della Volpe, who devotes a full chapter of his *Rousseau and Marx* to the argument. Della Volpe reconstructs Marx's criticism of Hegel in the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* as bringing out the "cognitive sterility" of Rational Explication (Della Volpe 1978: 165), which simply reproduces the "*un-digested, empirical contents*" of our existing concepts (167).

Della Volpe refers to such retentions, which I call conceptual accommodations, as "substantial ... tautologies" (162) or "tautologies of facts" (167), for the reason that they involve the identity of conceptual contents on either side of a logical operation. He also recognizes the Accommodation Argument as the central element in Marx's criticism of "Hegel's ... *a priori*, thoroughly deficient, method" (166), culminating in Marx's development of "a *new philosophical method*" (162). Moreover, he notes that Marx's later writings "would be very obscure but for the

⁷ The term "positivism," as Marx uses it, does not refer to the sort of positivism defended by, e.g. Ernst Mach or Carnap, nor even that of August Comte. It mirrors Hegel's usage in "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," where he claims that "the moral laws propounded by Jesus [would be] positive," if they were to "derive their validity from the fact that Jesus commanded them" (Hegel 1971: 73). "Positivism," in this sense, has more in common with modern legal positivism, than logical positivism, at least on the common misreading of legal positivism according to which it involves the idea that laws acquire normative authority just from having been sanctioned by relevant authorities (cf. Leiter 2009, 2015a). The connection between positivism, in Marx's sense, and the positivism of the Vienna Circle, is that both take their inputs as given, creating garbage in/garbage out cycles.

epistemological key provided by this so-called immature work” (166). Thus, Della Volpe identifies the Accommodation Argument as essential for understanding all of Marx’s subsequent writings.

Della Volpe is singular in this regard. Those few other readers of Marx who discuss the Accommodation Argument in passing show signs of direct or indirect influence by Della Volpe (cf. Colletti 1973: Ch. 6; 1975: 20-22; Suchting 1986b: 91; Murray 1988: 41, 63-64; Walker 2001: 12; Bhaskar 2011: 118). In a sense, therefore, Della Volpe is the sole forebear to this discussion.

55. Let us review. Marx improves upon previous versions of the Accommodation Argument against Rational Explication by distinguishing two dimensions of the problem. First, Rational Explication lacks criteria for determining when frameworks fail by empirical lights. Second, Rational Explication retains some core content across every explication (save in limit cases). The result is that faulty empirical commitments are preserved across explications in the form of conceptual accommodations. Thus, according to Marx, Rational Explication amounts to little more than an “*uncritical, mystical way of interpreting an old world-view in terms of a new one which turns it into nothing better than an unfortunate hybrid*” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 83; and cf. 102).

2.4. The Paradox of Analysis and the Paradox of Inference

56. Having detailed Marx’s formulation of the Accommodation Argument, I turn now to its further generalization. This will involve following up on the suggestion, derived from Brandom, that Rational Explication’s correction against the shortcomings of Naïve Analysis turns, somehow, on considerations of the paradox of analysis. I will begin this brief discussion with a treatment of the paradox of analysis, showing how Rational Explication corrects against it. I will then argue that the paradox of analysis, understood in terms of the sort of analysis pursued by both Naïve Analysis

and Rational Explication, turns out to be a special case of another paradox: the paradox of inference. I will then argue that we can understand the Accommodation Argument by analogy to another special case of the paradox of inference, pertaining in particular to explicative inference. This will put me in position to highlight the limitations of Marx's Accommodation Argument.

57. On the account developed in the previous chapter, Rational Explication improves upon Naïve Analysis by rejecting its supposition that all concepts, in principle, are consistent in their objective contents, such that any inconsistencies we detect belong only to our subjective representations of those contents (cf. §1.56). By rejecting this supposition, and recognizing the possibility of irreducibly inconsistent concepts, the practitioner of Rational Explication is able to recognize another problem for Naïve Analysis.

58. The aim of Naïve Analysis is to improve the consistency of our (grasp of our) conceptual frameworks, through strict analysis. We begin with a nominal definition of our concept: a core set of principles or truisms that pick the concept out (cf. §1.23). Thus, the concept <red> will include, as part of its nominal definition, that red is a color. No analysis of <red> on which red is not a color can be thought successful. It follows that the principles included under a concept's nominal definition serve as identity criteria for that concept: two definitions built upon the same nominal definition are rival definitions of the same concept (cf. §1.35). Strict analysis draws out the analytic consequences of the principles constitutive of the nominal definition of the concept under analysis. It renders our grasp of the concept more determinate, leaving the nominal definition unchanged.

As the practitioner of Rational Explication recognizes, however, it is possible for the principles contained under a concept's nominal definition to give rise to logical or semantical

inconsistencies. It follows that Naïve Analysis, because it is conservative with respect to nominal definitions, is also conservative with respect to the inconsistencies they give rise to (cf. §1.48).

59. Thus, when applied to inconsistent concepts, Naïve Analysis faces a dilemma: either (i) it preserves the identity of the concepts it analyzes, but also preserves their internal inconsistencies, and therefore leaves us in an undesirable epistemic situation; or (ii) it avoids preserving internal inconsistencies across analysis, but fails to respect the identity criteria of its *analysanda*. The practitioner of Naïve Analysis is blinded to this dilemma by their unfounded belief in the in-principle coherence of all received concepts. The practitioner of Rational Explication, by contrast, recognizes the dilemma, and resolves it by creatively embracing one horn: they opt to avoid conservatism about logical and semantical inconsistencies by rejecting analysis as a procedure for improving our epistemic situations, opting instead for a method of explication which treats all of the principles constitutive of its *explicanda*, including nominal definitions, as revisable (cf. §1.56).

60. The dilemma just identified is a version of the paradox of analysis. On its classical formulation, the paradox of analysis consists in the following dilemma: if the analysis of a concept C is valid (i.e. is a real analysis), then it is in no way informative, because it has shown us only what is already present in C; and if the analysis of C is informative, then it is not valid (i.e. it is not a real analysis), as it contains something other than what is already present in C.⁸

⁸ The term “paradox of analysis” owes originally to Langford (1942). See Moore’s response to Langford in Moore (1942, pp. 660-67), as well as Frege (1979, pp. 208-11) and Carnap (1947, pp. 63-64). Two forms of the paradox of analysis are distinguished in Ackerman (1992). The first is a general problem of analysis, while the second concerns the analysis of <analysis>. For an attempt to solve the problem in its first form see W. Sellars (1950a, 1950b), and for an attempt to solve the problem in its second form, see W. Sellars (1964).

61. This dilemma is underwritten by three basic commitments: (i) that analysis reveals only the contents of our concepts; (ii) that informativeness requires more than this; and (iii) that the function or purpose of analysis is to inform. The first two of these are subject to attack, along various routes, by those whose aim it is to resolve the paradox of analysis. The third commitment, however, simply brings out the force of the dilemma: if the paradox cannot be resolved, then analysis cannot perform its function in philosophy, and conceptions of philosophical method on which analysis plays a decisive role face a real challenge. There have been many efforts to resolve the paradox of analysis. None have been so successful as to dissuade philosophers from further attempts. The paradox remains a live issue, and contributors to recent debates in philosophical methodology often take it to be criterial, for the success of candidate methods in philosophy, that they provide some answer to it (cf. Olsson 2007; Rattan 2014; King 2016; Nado 2019; Burgess 2020: 128).

62. Brandom suggests that the paradox of analysis is somehow responsible for the sense in which the “analysis of meanings is a fundamentally *conservative* enterprise” (Brandom 2001: 77). The idea is (presumably) that analysis is conservative just to the extent that it is uninformative. Now, analysis does change our epistemic situation in one sense. It fills out our subjective grasp of the contents of the *analysandum*. Because the epistemic situation that emerges on the application of analysis follows from the situation that precedes it by analytic necessity, however, there is a sense in which it is already contained or prefigured in that preceding situation. It follows that analysis does not actually inform us about anything we do not already know. At best, it redirects our attention from one bit of information we possess in one sense to another bit of information we possess in another sense. Analysis, therefore, is conservative not just about inconsistencies and representational errors, but about every element of our current epistemic situation.

63. Rational Explication avoids the paradox of analysis by forfeiting its claim to be an analytic method. Though strict analysis still plays a role in Rational Explication, namely as its procedure for identifying inconsistencies in predecessor frameworks (cf. §1.58), it no longer functions as the method's procedure of discovery (i.e. its procedure for arriving at new epistemic situations). As just discussed, Rational Explication allows that its *explicanda* may undergo substantial changes in the process of explication, including changes to the principles in their nominal definitions. It does not suffer, therefore, from the variety of conservatism described by the paradox of analysis.

64. If we understand analysis as strict analysis, it turns out that the paradox of analysis concerns the uninformativeness of a definite form of necessary inference (i.e. analytic inference), and is in fact a special case of the paradox of inference. Like the paradox of analysis, the paradox of inference presents us with a dilemma. On its classical formulation, this dilemma takes the following form: if the necessary inference from P to Q is valid (i.e. is a real necessary inference), then it is no way informative, because it has shown us only what one already holds in holding that P; and if the necessary inference from P to Q is informative, then it is not valid (i.e. it is not a real necessary inference), as it contains something more than what one already holds in holding that P.⁹ We must choose, therefore, between the necessity of our inferences and their informativeness.

⁹ The paradox of inference, in its modern form, is most often attributed to M.R. Cohen and Nagel (1993, pp. 173-76). The problem is much older. See Mill (1974, pp. 183-208) and Bosanquet (1895, pp. 137-50). The problem is given something like the Cohen-Nagel formulation already in Jones (1898), whose important contributions to early analytic philosophy are too often overlooked. For a recent attempt at resolving the paradox, see Duží (2010).

65. Again, this paradox is underwritten by three basic commitments: (i) that necessary inference from a given set of premises reveals only what one already holds in holding to those premises; (ii) that informativeness requires more than this; and (iii) that the function or purpose of inference is to inform. And again, the first two of these are foci of attack for those who set out to resolve the paradox, while the third brings out the form of the dilemma: if the paradox of inference cannot be resolved, then necessary inference cannot perform its function in philosophy, and conceptions of philosophical method on which necessary inference plays a decisive role face a real challenge. The paradox of inference has received significantly less attention, especially in recent years, than has the paradox of analysis. Nevertheless, it too remains a live issue in philosophy.

66. I will now show that, when analysis is understood as strict analysis, the paradox of analysis is a special case of the paradox of inference.

The paradox of analysis presents us with the following dilemma: if an analysis is valid, then it is uninformative, because it reveals only what is already present in the *analysandum*; if the analysis is informative, then it is not valid, as it reveals something other than what is present in the *analysandum*. Analyses, however, just consist in analytic inferences. The validity of analysis consists, therefore, in the validity of analytic inference. Analytic inference, moreover, is a mode of necessary inference, and its validity just is its necessity. Reformulated, the paradox of analysis presents us with the following dilemma: if the necessary (analytic) inference from the *analysandum* to the *analysans* is valid (and thus our analysis is valid), then it is in no way informative, because it reveals only what one already holds in applying the *analysandum*; and if the necessary (analytic) inference from the *analysandum* to the *analysans* is informative, then it is not valid (and thus our analysis is not valid), for the reason that it reveals something other than

what one already holds in applying the *analysandum*. Comparison to the classical formulation of the paradox of inference, above, reveals this to be a straightforward case of the latter paradox.

67. Marx claims, in his formulation of the Accommodation Argument, that the conservatism of Rational Explication is guaranteed by its reliance on explicative inference. Because Rational Explication takes successor frameworks to follow by necessity of explicative inference from their less adequate predecessors, it also must suppose that these predecessors are somehow contained already in those less adequate predecessors. There is a more abstract sense in which the successor is contained in the predecessor, just as explicative consequence. There is also a more concrete sense in which (a subset of) the contents of the successor are contained in the predecessor, as the core content that is preserved across explicative inference in the otherwise reformed successor.

Note that Rational Explication, on this account, preserves core contents across explications without concern for their representational adequacy, just as Naïve Analysis preserves nominal definitions across analyses without concern for the logical or semantical consistency. The major difference is that nominal definitions are consciously selected for, based on our best intuitions about the content of a given concept, while core contents are produced in the course of explication.

68. Adopting the vocabulary of the present discussion, we might say that Marx's Accommodation Argument shows that Rational Explication falls prey to a special case of the paradox of inference concerned with explicative inference. Thus, the formal dimension of Marx's Accommodation Argument to a determination of the paradox of inference—a sibling to the paradox of analysis.

Thus, Rational Explication faces the following dilemma: if the necessary (explicative) inference from the *explicandum* to the *explicans* is valid (and thus our explication is valid), then it

is in no way informative, because it reveals only what one already holds in applying the *explicandum*; and if the necessary (explicative) inference from the *explicandum* to the *explicans* is informative, then it is not valid (and thus our explication is not valid), for the reason that it reveals something other than what one already holds in applying the *explicandum*. Comparison to the classical formulation of the paradox of inference reveals this, too, to be a special case of the latter.

69. One might object that Rational Explication, unlike Naïve Analysis, modifies our concepts, and is informative just to the extent that it does. However, it modifies our concepts by a necessary mode of inference. It follows that, just as the *analysandum* in a token Naïve Analysis contains its *analysans* as a necessary analytic consequence, the *explicandum* in a token Rational Explication contains its *explicans* as a necessary explicative consequence. It follows that, though our definition of our concept changes after Rational Explication, if we accept Rational Explication's understanding of its own procedures, nothing new has been introduced into the concept from without. This is made tangible by the core content preserved literally across explications, but holds also for those elements in a concept that undergo modification in the course of explication.

70. The positive upshot of reframing the formal dimension of Marx's Accommodation Argument as a special case of the paradox of inference is that it makes clear that Marx's formulation—though it already generalizes on the results of earlier formulations by Schelling and Feuerbach—admits of yet further generalization. For every necessary form of inference we might adopt as our procedure of discovery, there is a special case of the paradox of inference in virtue of which that procedure will be systematically conservative or uninformative with respect to its content.

In some cases, like Naïve Analysis, this will be obvious, for the reason that most or all of the predecessor concept's content will be preserved literally across the procedure. In other cases, like Rational Explication, only a subset (or, in a limiting case, none) of the predecessor concept's content will be preserved literally across the procedure. So long as the mode of inference by which this change is effected remains necessary, however, the result is conservative even where it appears, on the surface, to be transformative. Thus, all necessary modes of inference will give rise to the sort of conservatism Marx points out. It is not explicative inference in particular that renders Rational Explication conservative, but the necessary character of its procedure of discovery.

71. In its maximally general form, therefore, the Accommodation Argument takes the following form: if, in operating on our concepts, we take successor configurations to follow by any mode of necessary inference from predecessor configurations (thus establishing discursive continuity between predecessor and successor), this will result in our falling afoul of some corresponding special case of the paradox of inference, and thus in some corresponding variety of conservatism. It remains to be seen whether each of these varieties of conceptual conservatism is pernicious or excessive in its own right. As qualified above (cf. §2.45), the perniciousness of Rational Explication's conservatism owes to its failure to correct against representational error.

Nevertheless, this formulation of the Accommodation Argument makes clear that all perennial methods—methods on which knowledge is taken to be available to inquirers from the very start of inquiry, requiring only to be drawn out by necessary inference (cf. §1.34)—suffer from some variety of cognitive conservatism.

72. Thus, the maximally general formulation of the Accommodation Argument brings out the following conclusion: it is the necessity of explicative inference, in particular, that is responsible for Rational Explication's in-principle tendency to produce conservative outcomes. Because Marx stops short of this maximally general formulation, he does not recognize this conclusion. He remains unclear, therefore, about what it is in Rational Explication, besides its failure to correct against representational error, that leads it to generate conceptual accommodations.

This unclarity has consequences for Marx's early attempt to replace Rational Explication by his own improved method for philosophy. In particular, because he has not yet recognized the necessity of explicative inference as responsible for Rational Explication's conservatism, Marx elects to retain explicative inference on his own method. He sets out to defend a naturalistically modified perennial method, rather than abandoning the perennial method altogether. His delayed realization that conservatism and necessity go together is responsible, in part, for generating the divide between the young and the mature Marx. I turn now to Marx's early method for philosophy.

Chapter 3 – Marx’s Early Method: Genetico-Critical Explication

1. Marx takes his Accommodation Argument to show that Rational Explication retains empirically inadequate commitments across explications, and thus that it is untenable as a method of criticism in philosophy. In this chapter, I will reconstruct the first method Marx proposes as an alternative to Rational Explication. I will call this method “Genetico-Critical Explication,” for reasons that will become clear in the course of my presentation.

2. I have framed the Accommodation Argument as a conditional dilemma: so long as it fails to correct against representational error, Rational Explication must either (i) cease to preserve core contents across explications, and thus give up the discursive continuity of predecessor frameworks with their more logically and semantically consistent successor frameworks; or (ii) accept that any frameworks produced by the method may contain conceptual accommodations (cf. §2.51).

The first horn of the dilemma is threatening because it challenges Rational Explication’s solution to the Continuity Problem: the problem of how questions framed in a given predecessor-framework vocabulary can be intelligibly resolved by answers framed in a materially different successor-framework vocabulary (cf. §1.69). The second horn is threatening because it challenges Rational Explication’s status as a critical method—a method whose deployment in philosophy contributes to bringing about the core aim of the critical or enlightenment program: the rejection of all arbitrary authority, here especially arbitrary intellectual authority (cf. §1.13).

3. Marx proposes splitting the horns of the dilemma raised by his Accommodation Argument by rejecting its assumed condition. He retains from Rational Explication its explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, and thus retains its solution to the Continuity Problem. Inspired by

Feuerbach's writings on methodological naturalism, however, he supplements Rational Explication's coherence-based procedure of justification by an additional check on the representational adequacy of successor frameworks. On his proposed method, a framework must improve upon the representational adequacy of its predecessor to qualify as a legitimate successor. Thus, Marx splits the horns of the dilemma just insofar as he introduces a method that in fact corrects against representational error. In principle, this should dissolve the dilemma.

4. Marx's attempt is ultimately unsuccessful, and Genetico-Critical Explication is ultimately untenable. I will argue as much, and show that Marx himself concludes as much himself, in Ch. 5. Through the application of Genetico-Critical Explication, however, Marx arrives at some of his more important theoretical results. He later revises these results, and incorporates them into more robust descriptive and explanatory theories, in keeping with his mature method. The early theories themselves, however, play an essential heuristic role in shaping Marx's mature theories.

I will aim, therefore, to reconstruct Marx's early method with sufficient clarity to both (i) bring out the specific ways in which Genetico-Critical Explication corrects against and improves upon Rational Explication, especially from the perspective of Marx's formulation of the Accommodation Argument; and (ii) make it easy to see how Genetico-Critical Explication informs Marx's early first-order theorizing. In Ch. 4, I will discuss the role this method plays in the *1844 Manuscripts*, both in order to shore up my claim that this is fact Marx's early method, and in order to show how approaching the *1844 Manuscripts* with a clear picture of Genetico-Critical Explication in mind can help resolve a number of recalcitrant exegetical questions.

5. I will proceed as follows. In the first part of the chapter, I will discuss Genetico-Critical Explication's procedure of discovery, explicative inference. This is taken over in full from Rational Explication, so my aim will be to prove that Marx in fact retains the procedure, and draw out some of its consequences for his method. In the second part of the chapter, I will discuss Marx's naturalistic procedure of justification, as well as Feuerbach's very similar procedure. In the third part, I will show how Genetico-Critical Explication proposes to resolve the problem introduced by the Accommodation Argument. In the fourth and final part, I will introduce a brief case study in Genetico-Critical Explication, bringing out the role it plays in Marx's "On the Jewish Question."

6. Readers interested in Marx's method have tended, almost without exception, to focus on the method of his late works (cf. Carver 1974; Sayer 1979; Zelený 1980; Little 1986; Wilson 1991; Beamish 1992; Walker 2001; Ollman 2003). Such readers have concerned themselves with questions of scientific method, therefore, rather than with questions of philosophical method. Many recent studies have focused on the ostensible retention of Hegel's method by the late Marx (cf. Uchida 1988; T. Smith 1990; Murray 1993; Meaney 2002; Arthur 2014; Fineschi 2014; Hanzel 2014) or on the methodological differences between Hegel and the late Marx (cf. Rosenthal 1998). Even those few readers who have discussed Marx's early method have done so only in passing, or in over-vague language (cf. Rancière 1989 [1965]: 75-99; Suchting 1983: 19-22; forthcoming; M. Evans 1984; Kain 1986: Ch. 1; Murray 1988: Chs. 1-2). One of my aims in this chapter, therefore, is to fill a gap in the literature by providing a clear and exact account of Marx's early method.

3.1. Procedure of Discovery: Explicative Inference

7. Marx recognizes two aims for his method: “clarification and justification” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 326; translation altered).¹ In its clarificatory moment, Genetico-Critical Explication moves from less consistent to more consistent concepts or frameworks of concepts. This is Marx’s procedure of discovery, which he calls “analysis” (cf. 94, 147, 279). To avoid confusion with more familiar (and more naïve) forms of analysis, I will continue to favor the term “explication.”

8. In an open letter to Arnold Ruge, Marx writes that, in philosophy, “our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but by analysing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself,” adding that this “is not a question of drawing a great mental dividing line between past and future, but of *realising* the thoughts of the past” (144). Explication modifies our epistemic situations by revealing the true content of the cognitive commitments we already hold.

In what I will call his “basic statement” on Genetico-Critical Explication’s procedure of discovery, Marx claims that, through explication, “[t]he critic can ... start out from any form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from the forms *peculiar* to existing reality develop the true reality as its obligation and its final goal” (143). By this, Marx means that it is possible to move, just by explication, from received frameworks, which describe reality as we initially apprehend it (“existing reality”), to frameworks describing reality as it really is (“true reality”).

9. Marx’s basic statement, just by itself, already hints at a number of commitments shared between Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication. In particular, both methods are committed

¹ Where the MEGA reads “Verständigung und Berechtigung” (Marx and Engels 1975d: 399), the MECW reads “explanation and justification” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 326). I have modified the translation of “Verständigung” to avoid equivocation with “Erklärung.” My choice of “clarification” mirrors decisions made elsewhere by the translators of the MECW. See for instance Marx and Engels (1975d, p. 489; 1975a, p. 145).

to (i) conceptual frameworks, rather than individual concepts, as the basic unit of analysis; (ii) the thesis of conceptual holism; (iii) the idea that conceptual frameworks sometimes contain objective (i.e. content-level) inconsistencies; (iv) the idea that inconsistencies of this sort are rationally intolerable, and must be resolved into better, more consistent concepts; and (v) the idea that this reform, understood as explication, involves both analytic and synthetic elements.

It also makes clear that Genetico-Critical Explication, like Rational Explication, is a perennial method in philosophy: it takes the truth to be available to us in principle from the start of inquiry, requiring only to be drawn out through explication (cf. §1.34). I will discuss each of these points in turn, stressing Genetico-Critical Explication's debts to Rational Explication.

10. I will begin with an example of Genetico-Critical Explication from Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. There, Marx subjects Hegel's concept of <state> to sustained analysis. He does this by drawing specific, definite principles out of this concept, and showing how they give rise to inconsistencies. This is the moment of strict analysis (cf. §1.58).

Marx analyzes Hegel's claim that the legislative power of a state is a power granted by a constitution, which must presuppose that constitution, and cannot be responsible, therefore, for shaping that constitution in the first place (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 54-58). Hegel recognizes that constitutional changes do occur, and that the legislative body of the state sometimes plays a role in bringing these changes to fruition. To neutralize the point, however, he writes in the *Philosophy of Right* that "[t]his progression is a change which takes place imperceptibly, and without possessing the form of change" (Hegel 1991a: §298). Such changes do not count as decisions on the part of the legislature. Note that the opposite conclusion—that they do in fact count as decisions on the part of the legislature—is precluded by definition, and thus by necessity.

11. Marx worries about the apparently *ad hoc* nature of constitutional change in Hegel. He points out that, on Hegel's definition, the law is the highest expression of human "freedom" and "self-conscious reason" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 56). It is the organ by which a community governs itself. Marx argues, however, that Hegel's account of legislative powers, above, rules out our treating constitutional emendations—among the most legally impactful legislative acts—as expressions of that freedom. Instead, Marx claims, exaggerating somewhat, constitutional changes arise, on Hegel's definitions, by "blind natural necessity" (56). For the legislative power, proper legislative acts relate to constitutional changes just as, for the human body, deliberate actions relate to involuntary bodily functions. We do not count the latter functions as meaningfully free.

Thus, Marx purports to derive an inconsistency in Hegel's definition of <constitution>. For Hegel, legislative activity is an expression of freedom; but, in its highest form, as constitutional emendation, it is not an expression of freedom. Marx claims that we should recognize this "collision between the constitution and the legislature [as] nothing but ... a contradiction in the concept of the constitution" (57). He arrives at this conclusion just by means of strict analysis.

12. Already from this example, it is clear that Genetico-Critical Explication concerns itself not just with individual concepts, but with entire frameworks. In the course of analyzing Hegel's concept of <state>, Marx is led to analyze his concept of <legislative power>, which leads him, in turn, to analyze <constitution>. This all belongs to the analysis of <state> because Marx takes <state> to be determined in part by the logical and semantical relation it stands in to <legislative power>, and he takes <legislative power> to be determined in part by the logical and semantical relation it stands in to <constitution>. What it is for something to be the concept <legislative power>, on

Hegel's account, is for it to stand in such-and-such relationships to other concepts, including <constitution>. Strict analysis consists in the disclosure of just such conceptual linkages.

To say that the minimal unit of analysis on Genetico-Critical Explication is the conceptual framework, and not the individual concept, is to say that analysis in Genetico-Critical Explication, as in both Naïve Analysis (cf. §1.26) and Rational Explication (cf. §1.58), is connective and not reductive, which is to say that it is concerned to carve out the position a concept occupies in the space of reasons rather than to identify the primitive elements to which a concept can be reduced.

13. In his basic statement, Marx makes Genetico-Critical Explication's commitment to treating frameworks as the minimal unit of analysis explicit: Genetico-Critical Explication analyzes "form[s] of theoretical and practical consciousness" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 143; my emphasis). Marx's "forms of consciousness" [*Formen des Bewußtseins*] are closely modeled on Hegel's "shapes of consciousness" [*Gestalten des Bewußtseins*], which I have already discussed (cf. §1.59). Both terms pick out conceptual frameworks of a sort.

Marx's forms of consciousness in particular are populated both by abstract logical and semantical categories, and by more determinate empirical concepts, such as pick out natural and social kinds and the real relations that hold between them. This is made clear in Marx's discussion of the theological or religious form of consciousness, which he refers to as a "general theory" of "the world of man, the state, society" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 175). Incidentally, Marx explicitly characterizes religion as a "form of consciousness" in later writings (cf. 1975c: 53). As in my earlier discussion of Rational Explication, I will refer to these just as "conceptual frameworks."

14. As in the case of Rational Explication, then, there is a kind of equivalence, on Genetico-Critical Explication, between (i) individual concepts, which always presuppose other individual concepts; (ii) the framework of concepts to which these concepts belong; and (iii) the complex network of inferentially-related claims that defines the web of rational linkages between these concepts. In this context, we can refer to this third element as a “theory.” Thus, Genetico-Critical Explication is characterized by easy transition between the level of concepts, the level of frameworks, and the level of theories. From Marx’s perspective, Hegel’s concept of <state>, his general political framework, and his theory of right are one and the same. This transition between levels of cognitive generality is legitimate only in light of Marx’s tacit commitment to a form of conceptual holism on which all concepts are defined by their relations to other concepts.

15. Marx’s conceptual holism, and his commitment to treating conceptual frameworks as his basic unit of analysis, can be seen in his repeated insistence that “[t]he formulation of a question is its solution” (1975a: 147). This otherwise startling claim takes on an air of plausibility just in case we accept both conceptual holism, and the idea—anticipated already by Marx’s criticisms of Rational Explication (cf. §2.46)—that an adequate framework is a representationally adequate framework.

To formulate a question, on Marx’s meaning, is to succeed in formulating it (i.e. to formulate it in a rationally adequate conceptual vocabulary. To deploy such a vocabulary means to accept a theory that it is representationally adequate to the subject matter discussed. Thus, before I can successfully formulate my question, I must first have arrived at an adequate theory of its subject matter. It follows that, by definition, whenever I do successfully formulate a question, I have, as a matter of course, already resolved that question, for I am already in possession of a

theory that is representationally adequate to the subject matter of the question. If I were not in possession of such a theory, I would not know how to ask my question properly in the first place.

In this spirit, Marx claims that “[t]rue criticism ... analyses the questions and not the answers,” for “[j]ust as the solution of an algebraic equation is given once the problem has been put in its simplest and sharpest form, so every question is answered as soon as it has become a *real* question” (Marx 1975: 182). This claim is intelligible only in case Genetico-Critical Explication presupposes the holism described above, on which sentence meaning, framework configuration, and theory shape are roughly interchangeable. Note, however, that even then, the claim does not hold for empirical questions: the question how many grains of sand there are on all the world’s beaches will elude us long after we attain mastery over the relevant conceptual vocabulary.

16. Marx’s early holism has not been much discussed. Those readers who have recognized the signs and symptoms of conceptual holism in Marx’s early writings have tended to interpret these, instead, as indications of an ontological holism, and in particular of the so-called “doctrine of internal relations” (cf. Ollman 1976: 26-40; Sayers 2015). The doctrine of internal relations is the metaphysical thesis that the essence of every existing thing is constituted by the relations it stands in to every other existing thing (cf. Blanshard 1967). The doctrine itself owes to F. H. Bradley, a rough disciple of Hegel, and is strongly associated with the tradition of British Idealism.

I will remain agnostic on the question whether Marx presupposes something like the doctrine of internal relations. There are passages that suggest he does (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 336-37), and passages that suggest he does not (cf. Marx 1986b: 262; Hudelson 1984). I will argue in Ch. 5, however, that even if Marx does accept the doctrine of internal relations, it does not have

much significance for his first-order theorizing, which is broadly concerned with nomological and mechanistic causal explanations, rather than with metaphysical grounding explanations.²

17. In his analysis of Hegel's concept of <legislative power>, Marx derives an inconsistency from Hegel's framework. In the course of the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, he derives a number of such inconsistencies. His aim in doing so is to establish that Hegel's broader project of articulating a maximally consistent concept or theory of <state> has failed.

18. Genetico-Critical Explication does not reach its end, however, with the identification of inconsistencies. Like Rational Explication, it proposes to improve our concepts. Thus, having revealed the inconsistencies at work in Hegel's concept of <state>, Marx moves (by necessity, he supposes) to a more adequate concept of the same. In particular, he introduces a distinction between two concepts: <political state>, which describes an entity bound by a constitution; and <anthropological state>, which describes the community of human individuals whose day-to-day activity shapes the political state (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 79). A distinction of this sort exists already in Hegel, as the difference between "state" and the "civil society" (Hegel 1991a: §324 Re). Marx recognizes this distinction, and draws upon it, framing his own distinction in like terms. He

² Incidentally, wherever there is evidence that supports attributing the doctrine of internal relations to Marx, that evidence can more readily (and at less theoretical expense) be interpreted as evidence of Marx's conceptual holism. Those who nevertheless interpret Marx in metaphysical terms are motivated, I think, by the thought that he, as a practical-minded philosopher, must be concerned with the things themselves, and not with concepts or methods. Thus, Alfred Schmidt writes that "Marx neither wished nor needed to give" answers to questions about methods for arriving at knowledge, "in view of the advanced stage of philosophical consciousness provided already by Hegel's system" (A. Schmidt 1971: 108). It is one purpose of this dissertation to bring out the wrongheadedness of such claims.

Note that claiming Marx need not address epistemological issues is different from claiming that he in fact does not, or shies away from doing so for one reason or another. Though I have shown that much in Marx's writings bears on epistemological issues, it is true that he is averse to approaching these issues directly and explicitly—hence the need for the extensive reconstruction developed here. For reflections on this, see Colletti (1973, pp. 114, 199).

maintains, however, that Hegel fails to recognize the proper relation between the two senses of <state>, and thus fails—the meaning of a concept being determined by the relations it stands in to other concepts—to grasp the true contents of either concept (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 82-83).

19. Marx moves, by necessary inference, from Hegel's less adequate predecessor concept of <state>, to his own, more adequate successor concept, as well as to the fine-grained conceptual distinctions appropriate to it. This is Genetico-Critical Explication's procedure of discovery, explicative inference. This is the vindicating moment in Genetico-Critical Explication, by which it salvages past concepts by finding more adequate successors contained already within them. Marx does not remark on the logical character of the inferences involved in Genetico-Critical Explication's procedure of discovery. For reflections on this topic, we must turn to Feuerbach, from whom (as will become clear later in this chapter) Marx inherits the greater part of his method.

In his *Presentation, Development, and Critique of the Leibnizian Philosophy*, Feuerbach writes that his method of criticism “is as much an analytic as a synthetic enterprise,” in that it both subjects our concepts to strict analysis, and elicits “from that which is explicitly stated, that which is left unsaid, but which is yet contained in an undeveloped, implicit form” (Feuerbach 1910: 2; translated in Wartofsky 1977: 92). This passage very closely resembles those cited earlier, from Hegel, to clarify the role played by explicative inference in Rational Explication (cf. §1.62). My simple historical thesis, then, is this: Feuerbach adopts explicative inference as his procedure of discovery after scenting it in the writings of Hegel, and Marx, in turn, finds it in Feuerbach.

20. In “The Three Sources and Three Components Parts of Marxism,” V.I. Lenin writes that “the genius of Marx consists precisely in his having furnished answers to the questions already raised

by the foremost minds of mankind,” and that, for this reason, Marx’s framework is “the legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century” (Lenin 1963: 23). I do not cite Lenin, who is an inconsistent reader of Marx, as an authority. His claim, however, raises a challenge. If we are to take Marx to provide intelligible answers to questions raised already by previous frameworks, then he must resolve the Continuity Problem, introduced above (cf. §1.69).

Because Marx retains Rational Explication’s explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, he also retains its discursive-continuity-based solution to the Continuity Problem. Confronted with the question how answers framed in terms of a successor framework can intelligibly respond to questions framed in terms of a predecessor framework, the practitioner of Genetico-Critical Explication responds that successor frameworks are contained already in their predecessors as necessary consequences, requiring only to be drawn out by explicative inference.

21. This means that, like Rational Explication, Genetico-Critical Explication preserves core contents across explications (cf. §2.42). It is committed, therefore, to a systematic conservatism, though the question whether that conservatism is pernicious remains unsettled. Relatedly, Genetico-Critical Explication is, like both Naïve Analysis and Rational Explication, a perennial method: it supposes that the maximally adequate conceptual framework is available to us from the start of inquiry (cf. §1.34). Marx writes that “[r]eason has always existed, but not always in a reasonable form” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 143). The aim of Genetico-Critical Explication, therefore, is the “reform of consciousness” which “consists *only* in making the world aware of its own consciousness” (144). Awareness of this sort emerges by necessity of explicative inference.

22. Marx's retention of explicative inference during the early period constitutes his commitment to "immanent" or "internal" criticism (cf. §1.74). Thus, Raymond Geuss writes that the sort of criticism Marx practices here "is only possible if we can extract the very instruments of criticism from the agents' [i.e., the target of our criticism's] own form of consciousness" (Geuss 1981: 87-88). The internal character of Marx's method of criticism, therefore, is also its perennial character: it derives only those conclusions contained already in its starting point. Many readers of Marx, especially in the so-called Critical Theory (or Frankfurt School) tradition, take this commitment to be what is essential, or at least what is most valuable, in Marx's reflections on method (cf. Antonio 1981; Buchwalter 1991; Honneth 1991: 229, 249; Stahl 2013: 9-16; Ng 2015).

On the Critical Theory interpretation, Marx's contribution to philosophical methodology consists, at bottom, in his rejection of any procedure of discovery that fails to establish discursive continuity between predecessor and successor frameworks. Max Horkheimer associates procedures that fail of discursive continuity with what he calls "traditional theory" (Horkheimer 2002: 216-17), and Theodor Adorno associates them with what he calls "transcendent criticism" (Adorno 1983: 33). These are the principal bugbears of the Critical Theory tradition.

23. It is true that Marx retains Rational Explication's commitment to internal criticism in his early deployment of Genetico-Critical Explication. As I will argue in the final chapters of this dissertation, however, Marx comes in time to reject explicative inference, as well as the entire paradigm of internal criticism. Perhaps more importantly, in abandoning internal criticism, he comes also to abandon Rational Explication's solution to the Continuity Problem, and goes on to deploy a procedure of discovery that in fact fails of discursive continuity. Thus, by the time of his mature reflections, Marx comes to endorse traditional theory and transcendent criticism directly.

24. To review, Marx retains both the debunking moment (i.e. strict analysis) and the vindicating moment (i.e. explicative inference) of his procedure of discovery from Rational Explication. He is committed to conceptual holism, and to treating conceptual frameworks (or forms of consciousness) as his basic unit of analysis. Like the advocate for Rational Explication, he proposes to derive inconsistencies from rival frameworks by strict analysis, then improve upon those frameworks by deriving their successors from them by explicative inference. This means that Genetico-Critical Explication is also a perennial method, and that it counts as an internal or immanent method of criticism. To this point, Genetico-Critical Explication remains vulnerable to the Accommodation Argument. I will turn, now, to its differences from Rational Explication.

3.2. Procedure of Justification: Genetic Exculpation

25. Marx makes no claim to having invented or discovered Genetico-Critical Explication himself. The method owes originally to Feuerbach. There are differences between Marx's version of the method and that employed by Feuerbach, but Marx makes his debt to Feuerbach's approach explicit. He writes that "positive criticism as a whole ... owes its true foundations to the discoveries of *Feuerbach*," and that "*Feuerbach's* writings [are] the only writings since Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and *Logik* to contain a real theoretical revolution" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 232).

I will begin my discussion of Genetico-Critical Explication's procedure of justification, therefore, with Feuerbach. In his article "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," Feuerbach develops a primitive version of the Accommodation Argument, claiming that Hegel's philosophy suffers from several interrelated conservatism problems. I have argued that Feuerbach's version of the Accommodation Argument does not provide us with a convincing diagnosis of the sources

of Rational Explication's conservatism (cf. §2.28). Feuerbach does, however, sketch a possible solution—a new method of justification designed to secure against that conservatism.

26. Feuerbach charges the Hegel of the *Science of Logic* with irrationally accommodating the concept <nothingness> as part of his finished conceptual framework. He rejects that concept, which plays an important role in the opening arguments of Hegel's book, as a kind of metaphysical pseudoconcept. In the course of this criticism, Feuerbach draws on two distinct sorts of argument.

Those of the first sort are logical or linguistic in character, reminiscent of the Vienna Circle's arguments for the vacuity of metaphysical sentences. Thus, just as Rudolf Carnap argues that it is unacceptable to use "the word 'nothing' as a noun," and that even if it were not, "the existence of this entity would be denied by its very definition" (Carnap 1959: 71), Feuerbach argues that "[h]e who thinks nothingness thinks precisely nothing," and that "[t]he thought of nothingness is thought contradicting itself" (Feuerbach 2012e: 88). This similarity is probably not accidental. Feuerbach and the Vienna Circle philosophers all draw influence from the proto-positivist philosopher and philologist Otto Friedrich Gruppe, in whose writings one finds both (i) a clear anticipation of Feuerbach's critique of Hegel; and (ii) a clear anticipation of the Vienna Circle's logical critique of metaphysics (cf. Gruppe 1831, 1834; Cloeren 1988: Chs. 9-10).

27. Feuerbach's more distinctive arguments, however, are those of the second sort, which are of a broadly genetic or etiological character. Feuerbach claims that the concept of <nothingness>, contrary to Hegel's understanding, is "a product of the oriental imagination," akin to the "Zoroastrian conception of night" (Feuerbach 2012e: 91-92). Having subjected Hegel's philosophy to explication, Feuerbach now claims to occupy a representational vantage point from

which he can see something Hegel cannot—namely, that Hegel’s starting point (i.e. <nothingness>) already involves an error, and that the error in question has a clear explanation (i.e. a psychological one, having to do with the effects of religious imagination on our thinking). Thus, he takes the origin of the concept <nothingness> to cast suspicion on its justificatory status. Moreover, Feuerbach takes it that his ability to give this explanation, and thus cast doubt on a rival framework, helps to establish the representational superiority, and thus the meliorative character, of his successor.

28. I first introduced this second argumentative strategy, as it is used by both Feuerbach (cf. §2.23) and Schelling (cf. §2.9), in the previous chapter. Arguments of this sort set out to “explain the ideal by the real” (Schelling 2004: 194). That is, they set out to identify the etiological origins of our ideas. For Schelling, we vindicate our concepts by explaining them as emerging in the course of nature. For Feuerbach, however, we debunk our concepts by explaining them away as mere symptoms of the true, underlying reality.

29. In both cases, this argumentative strategy involves appeal to naturalistic explanatory devices usually proscribed by traditional, non-naturalistic methods in philosophy. This owes to the anti-naturalist’s absolute preference for justifying reasons over causes, an attitude expressed already in Plato (cf. Plato 1997b: 95e-100e). Feuerbach recognizes explicitly that his proposed strategy of argument runs afoul of anti-naturalistic strictures against causal explanation in philosophy.

In his account of the naturalism of his own method, Feuerbach relies on the Thomistic jargon of primary and secondary causes (cf. Feuerbach 1989: 189-191). In short, the primary cause of some substance S being p just is God’s good reason for making it so, while the secondary cause

of S being p is S belonging to some kind, all of whose members are by their very nature p (or exhibit a disposition toward being p). More plainly, to identify the secondary cause of some phenomenon is to say what aspects of nature brought it about, whereas to identify the primary cause of that same phenomenon is to say why it struck God as good that it should be thus-and-so.

30. Because his philosophy is concerned to demonstrate the reasonability of existing reality (i.e. the reason why it is good that things should be thus-and-so), Hegel is concerned principally with explanations of the latter, justifying sort. Thus, Feuerbach complains that Hegel “disregard[s]—and not accidentally, but rather as a consequence of the spirit of German speculative philosophy since Kant and Fichte—the secondary causes” (Feuerbach 2012e: 93). To this supposed error, he contrasts his own “genetico-critical philosophy,” which is “concerned with those things that are otherwise called secondary causes” (86). Thus, Feuerbach does not aim to identify the underlying reasonability of existing reality, but “the *natural grounds* and causes of things” (93), including of our concepts. This is the sense in which Feuerbach’s method of criticism is genetic in character.

31. In particular, Feuerbach is concerned to identify the natural causes of certain sorts of illusion, or representational error. Philosophical criticism, on Feuerbach’s account, works to “distinguish[] the essential from the non-essential” in our thinking (85). This means distinguishing the elements in our conceptual framework that belong there, because they fit reality, from those that do not belong, and demand revision. To identify some concept or cluster of concepts as non-essential, in this sense, just means to identify it as subjective (i.e. as contributed by us, as observers), as opposed to objective (i.e. as contributed by the world itself). As Feuerbach puts it, these non-essential elements are “contributed by the peculiar form of intuition or sensuousness” of the inquirer (85).

Thus, Feuerbach proposes to disqualify certain concepts as representationally inadequate, even where these do not give rise to logical or semantical inconsistencies. By describing the natural causes that lead to error, he also provides an explanation in support of the claim that the concepts under scrutiny are in fact errors. Thus, unlike Rational Explication, Feuerbach's proposed method does not "dogmatically" accept the core content of its *explicandum*, but "examines its *origin*," and in doing so, "questions whether [the] object is a real object, only an idea, or just a psychological phenomenon" (85-86). It does this, moreover, from the perspective of the framework arrived at after subjecting the relevant explicandum framework to explication.³

32. Allow me to introduce a second example of Feuerbach's naturalistic argumentative strategy. In the previous chapter, I introduced the outlines of Feuerbach's criticism of traditional theology, from which he derives, by explicative inference, his own second-order atheism (cf. §2.31). This second-order atheism, understood as a positive theory of God and the human being, is encapsulated in Feuerbach's claim that "in religion man contemplates his own latent nature" (Feuerbach 1989: 33). In ordinary language, Feuerbach's claim is that the concept <God> is in fact just a confused representation of human nature. He proposes to explain this fact genetically, as an error human beings fall into because of their participation in human nature. I will bring the point out in stages.

³ Marx Wartofsky argues that Feuerbach's genetic explanation just consists in his identifying erroneous assumptions responsible for giving rise to inadequate frameworks. The sense in which the argument is "genetic," then, is just that it identifies the logical or semantical genesis of downstream inconsistencies. See Wartofsky (1977, pp. 92-93). This account fails to distinguish between Feuerbach's explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery and his genetic approach to justification. Feuerbach's repeated insistence that his attention to genetic explanation involves attention to natural grounds, and his applications of the procedure, both support my reading.

33. First, Feuerbach claims that human beings all share a common nature, and that no one individual fully realizes that nature.⁴ Only the species as a whole brings out the full panoply of human perfections. It follows that every individual is, in some sense, imperfect. Feuerbach observes, however, that human beings are, by their common nature, quite uncomfortable with the idea of their own imperfection. He writes that, more often than not, the human individual

makes his own limitations the limitations of the species—a mistake which is intimately connected with the individual’s love of ease, sloth, vanity, and egoism. For a limitation which I know to be merely mine humiliates, shames, and perturbs me. Hence to free myself from this feeling of shame, from this state of dissatisfaction, I convert the limits of my individuality into the limits of the human nature in general (7).

This tendency, realized at population level, results in widespread belief that the species itself, in its very nature, is imperfect—that the human species itself is fundamentally corrupt or deficient.

34. Second, Feuerbach makes the further claim that, even when we mistake our species nature for something finite and imperfect, we nevertheless find ourselves producing manifestations of our true nature. In particular, we end up projecting the true attributes of the human species nature onto an imagined external subject, God. The perfections of God, therefore, are simply the perfections of the human species nature, removed to sufficient distance that human individuals are less inclined to deny their existence out of personal vanity. Thus, Feuerbach argues that the traditional concept of <God> arises to preponderance in the human mind by a wholly natural process.

He also insists, however, that this casts suspicion on the traditional concept of <God>, showing it to arise by a kind of deviant causal chain. Thus, Feuerbach insists that “when this projected image of human nature is made an object of reflection, of theology, it becomes an

⁴ In this, Feuerbach agrees with Kant, who claims in the *Anthropology* Pillau that “[e]very individual animal reaches the vocation of its nature; by contrast . . . only the entire human species is predisposed so that it can achieve this vocation” (Kant 2012: 274). Hegel, by contrast, holds that human individuals do realize their species nature, though only gradually, over the course of their entire lives (cf. Hegel 2007: 54; 1975: 83).

inexhaustible mine of falsehoods, illusions, contradictions, and sophisms” (214). In his explication of traditional theology, he identifies these inconsistencies, and draws out their consequences (by explicative inference) to introduce his own reformed framework. In his naturalistic justification of his successor, however, he sets out to explain, in the conceptual vocabulary of the successor, how the erroneous predecessor ever comes to take on the illusory appearance of plausibility.

35. Marx makes his commitment to a version of Feuerbach’s procedure fairly explicit. In the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, he criticizes those who would attempt to justify their own commitments just by identifying inconsistencies in rival frameworks. He claims that, in order to justify replacing traditional theology by a more adequate framework, for instance, it is not enough to point out the “contradiction of one and three” in “the dogma of the Holy Trinity” (91). The correct procedure, he claims, “shows the inner genesis of the Holy Trinity in the human brain” and thus “describes the act of its birth” (91).

Our proposed successor to traditional theology will count as a true successor (i.e. will be justified as a successor) only once we can demonstrate that successor’s ability to account, by its own descriptive resources, for the genesis of its less adequate predecessor. Moreover, the successor framework must provide some account of the broader laws or mechanisms that make this genesis necessary or predictable. Thus Marx writes that the proper procedure “not only shows up contradictions as existing; it *explains* them, it comprehends their genesis, their necessity” (91).

36. Marx makes clear, in “On the Jewish Question,” just why it is that successor frameworks have to provide accounts of the genesis of their predecessors. Even if we have demonstrated to our interlocutor, through explication, that our candidate framework corrects against the inconsistencies

of their own, the “optical illusion of their consciousness ... still remain[s] a puzzle, although now a psychological, a theoretical puzzle” (165). The question how I come to accept an inadequate framework is a puzzle just in case we assume that I am otherwise rational, and capable of distinguishing between more and less adequate commitments. Every error calls for an error theory.

Marx uses the term “psychological,” above, in contradistinction to “logical.” At this juncture, we have already done the logical work of bringing out the inconsistencies in the predecessor framework, and of correcting them by explicative inference. What remains to be shown is just which mechanisms (or laws) act upon my standard processes of concept formation such that I mistake an inadequate framework for an adequate one. Thus, in emphasizing that these are psychological explanations of a sort, Marx draws our attention to their naturalistic character.

37. Marx and Feuerbach’s implementations of the procedure differ on this point. Though he never acknowledges the disagreement explicitly, Marx rejects Feuerbach’s strong interpretation of the psychological character of genetic explanation in favor of a much weaker interpretation.

In the first stage of Feuerbach’s explanation, above (cf. §3.33), he identifies as a general human psychological disposition the tendency to mistake one’s own failings for the failings of the species at large. He then explains our commitment to traditional theology in terms of this tendency. It follows that, though this disposition is realized species-wide, Feuerbach explains each individual instance of commitment to traditional theology in terms of the personal psychology of the individual human being thus committed. He remarks, moreover, that “it is a ludicrous and even *culpable* error to define as finite and limited what constitutes the essence of man” (Feuerbach 1989: 7; my emphasis). Feuerbach takes his genetic explanations to be psychological in the sense

that they identify subjective psychological mistakes on the part of the observer—mistakes that the observer is culpable for, must be held accountable for, and might have avoided with due caution.

38. On his side, Marx distinguishes what he calls “*self-deception*” from “effective illusion” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 93). An observer suffers from self-deception when they are led by some psychological factor (i.e. a factor in their concept-formation process) to draw bad inferences from available evidence. Self-deception, therefore, is subjective error: it is the sort of cognitive error often discussed by contemporary cognitive scientists, and the sort treated by Feuerbach.

Effective illusions, by contrast, arise from evidence that is itself objectively misleading. As G. A. Cohen puts it, such illusions are “part of the world around us,” and “comprise the outer form of things” (G.A. Cohen 1978: 399).⁵ One does not have to fall prey to cognitive error to mistake fire for a kind of stuff or substance, when in fact it is a show of light generated by the decay of electrons excited in the course of pyrolysis. Likewise, contrary to Ludwig Wittgenstein’s suggestion (cf. Anscombe 1959: 151), the sun really does look like it orbits the earth. Marx provides, as his own example, “[t]he illusion that the state determines, when [in reality] it is being determined” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 100). Effective illusion, therefore, is objective illusion. It

⁵ Cohen, however, claims that we should make sense of Marx’s theory of effective illusion in terms of his antecedent commitment to “a two-dimensional contrast between observation and theory” involving a dimension of “pre-theoretical observation” (G.A. Cohen 1978: 399). Confronting the suggestion that Marx might take judgments about how things look to turn on previously accepted theories, Cohen writes that “[t]he only basis for this interpretation is a desire to bring Marx up to date with contemporary philosophy of science,” but that Marx is “more Victorian” (399 fn 1). Cohen is dead wrong on this point. As I will soon argue, Marx inherits an aversion to naïve empiricism from Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach. He never develops an explicit argument against the view, but does make its rejection explicit in his later writings (Marx 1986a: 38). I will discuss this topic at some length in Ch. 5, where I reconstruct a plausible argument against naïve empiricism from Marx’s explicit claims in *The German Ideology*. For present purposes, it is enough to observe that Marx makes ample appeal to the idea of theoretical presupposition throughout his reflections on method. The idea that being “Victorian” precludes such appeals fails to account for Hegel.

arises when the appearances themselves mislead us, not when our subjective concept-formation capacities misfire.

39. In brief, Marx's early method is concerned to explain predecessor frameworks away not in terms of the psychological dispositions of individuals, but in terms of objectively misleading features of the world as it really is (cf. Brudney 1998: 201). One consequence of this shift is that Marx does not, like Feuerbach, seek to inculcate the observer, showing how they are at fault in accepting one framework rather than another. Marx sets out to debunk predecessor frameworks, showing that they arise as partial-information responses to objectively misleading evidence, but he also sets out to characterize these responses as locally rational (i.e. as adequate to the evidence we are in fact presented with). In this sense, Marx's genetic explanations function, rather, to exculpate observers, characterizing them as good-faith inquirers whose honest efforts to arrive at truth are waylaid or frustrated by misleading features of the world. For this reason, I will refer to Genetico-Critical Explication's naturalistic procedure of justification as "genetic exculpation."

40. Thus, Genetico-Critical Explication replaces Rational Explication's flimsy coherence-based procedure of justification (cf. §1.27) by the procedure of genetic exculpation. On this procedure, the critic demonstrates the rational adequacy of their proposed successor framework not just by bringing out its logical and semantical coherence—though it will presumably treat these as negative or minimal requirements for the frameworks it vouchsafes—but by showing that the proposed framework contains the descriptive and explanatory resources necessary to account for the possibility that otherwise rational observers should fall into the error of taking its predecessor (already shown, through explication, to contain inconsistencies) to be rationally adequate.

By explaining away, as mere illusion, the seeming adequacy of frameworks now shown, through explication, to be inadequate, genetic exculpation allows those who fall into the error of taking such frameworks for granted to make sense of their own cognitive missteps in terms of the action of the world upon them. This is the sense in which the procedure is exculpatory: it provides excuses for the elicited cognitive behavior (e.g. endorsing contradictions) engaged in by entrenched defenders of less adequate frameworks. These excuses serve in turn to shore up the community of inquirers, explaining deep-seated disagreements away in terms of garbage inputs.

41. Genetic exculpation also demonstrates the representational superiority of the successor framework in whose conceptual vocabulary the exculpating genetic explanation is framed. A legitimate successor framework can always represent or explain at least one thing that the predecessor cannot, namely the fact or set of facts (let us call it F) in virtue of which the predecessor is inadequate to the world. Feuerbach's framework, for instance, can account for the (ostensible) fact that God just is an imagined projection of human nature, while its various predecessor frameworks, whose representational adequacy is subverted by this fact, cannot.

Adopting a conceptual framework always involves taking its representational adequacy for granted. It follows that no one accepting the predecessor framework is in position to represent that fact F in virtue of which it is inadequate, just by the predecessor framework's own resources: F always falls outside of the framework's representational scope. Trivially, the only framework that will not suffer from this inability to represent F is a framework for which there is no F (i.e. a framework that is maximally representationally adequate). Thus, genetic exculpation establishes the representational superiority of successor frameworks in all but limiting cases.⁶

⁶ The relevant limit cases are these. A maximally adequate framework (i.e. a framework containing no representational errors) will not admit of genetic exculpation, because there is no fact that it will fail to account for.

42. To give a genetic exculpation of some framework, I have to give account of how someone might fall into the error of taking this framework to adequately describe reality. This means explaining its representational shortcomings, but it also means explaining its representational successes—both in the vocabulary of the relevant successor framework. It follows that, in order to carry out a genetic exculpation, a successor framework must be (i) capable of reproducing all of the descriptive and explanatory achievements of its predecessor; as well as (ii) capable of identifying the sources of its predecessor’s descriptive and explanatory failures.

43. In Ch. 1, I distinguished between three levels of conceptual content that enter under reflection on the Rational Explication method schema (cf. §1.72). First, we each have subjective ideas about the contents of our concepts. Second, our concepts have objective contents, which those subjective ideas can succeed or fail to pick out. Third, there are the contents our concepts should have—or will have, in the fullness of time, once subjected to iterative reform by explicative inference.

On Genetico-Critical Explication, we encounter a distinct fourth level of content. Given some definite state of affairs, there are objective facts about the contents ordinary observers will be disposed to attribute to their concepts. These contents will resemble the true or correct contents more or less loosely depending on how the world presents itself. Call these contents the “appearances.”⁷ In Marx’s example above (cf. §3.38), it is a fact about the world that the state appears to determine history, though in truth the state is itself determined by extraneous factors.

A maximally inadequate framework (i.e. a framework on which every concept misrepresents the world) will admit of genetic exculpation, but every fact in every candidate successor is a fact that the framework fails to account for.

⁷ Marx uses the language of appearance and reality more frequently in his later writings. See for instance Marx (1996, pp. 92 fn 2, 93-95, 103, 311, 512, 537, 539, 549, 550, 557). For added context, see Goldway (1967). Marx also makes occasional use of the distinction, which he draws from Hegel, in his early writings. He complains in an early article, for instance, that the Augsburg Newspaper “invariably takes appearance for reality and the reality for appearance” (Marx 1975: 291). Thus, my use of these terms is thus very much in keeping with Marx’s own.

Under such conditions, ordinary observers will be inclined to define <state> in terms of <the power to determine history>. To do so is to define one's concepts directly in terms of the appearances.

44. It is always possible to define one's concepts in other ways. No force compels us to accept frameworks that reproduce the appearances. Because they are suggested, directly, by existing states of affairs, however, these appearances do exercise a kind of (resistible) gravity over untutored or spontaneous concept formation. The regularity with which our received frameworks reproduce the appearances, therefore, will depend on the regularity with which we form our concepts in untutored and spontaneous contexts. This, however, is an empirical claim, and must be made good, through genetic exculpation, by each individual candidate successor framework.

45. To this point, it has been convenient to refer to the *explicandum*, on both Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, just as the predecessor framework, and to the *explicans* as the successor. On Rational Explication, our only operation on frameworks (i.e. reform by explicative inference) is forward-looking, or prospective. Genetico-Critical Explication, however, involves a second operation: the genetic exculpation of predecessor frameworks in the conceptual vocabulary of the successor. On this second operation, the successor framework comes first, functioning as *explanans* in the genetic exculpation of the predecessor framework, which serves as *explanandum*.

46. To simplify matters, I will adopt a new naming scheme from this point forward. On both Genetico-Critical Explication and Marx's mature method (introduced in Ch. 6), the successor framework is thought of as describing the reality of which the predecessor describes a mere appearance. More exactly, through the procedure of genetic exculpation, the predecessor is shown

to mirror the appearances, and the successor shown to better carve underlying reality. Thus, on Genetico-Critical Explication, we move by explication from relative appearance to relative reality, and then explain the appearances away as appearances in the realistic vocabulary thus produced.

Accordingly, in what follows, I will refer to the predecessor framework as the A-framework (i.e. the appearance framework), and I will refer to the successor framework as the R-framework (i.e. the reality framework). This setup implies the existence of a single, maximally adequate R-framework, capable in principle of providing genetic exculpations of every prior A-framework. When necessary, I will refer to this point of convergence as the “final framework.”

47. Marx goes on to specify just what it means for an R-framework to explain the origins of an A-framework. Unfortunately, he does this in fairly obscure language. He writes that the practitioner of Rational Explication’s “chief error is to conceive the *contradiction of appearances as unity in essence, in the idea*, while in fact it has something more profound for its essence, namely, *an essential contradiction*” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 91). I will try to bring the basic claim out.

The phrase “contradiction of appearances” refers, here, to logical and semantical inconsistencies at the level of the A-framework. Marx claims that Rational Explication shows us only how less adequate predecessor frameworks dissolve into more adequate successors—thus revealing how the “contradiction of appearances” dissolves into “unity” at the level of “essence.” This is to say: Rational Explication gives no real explanation of why we begin in a state of inconsistency, beyond recognizing this as a necessary step along the way to a more adequate conception of the world. Why do we come to mistake a “contradiction of appearances” for reality?

48. Marx suggests that Genetico-Critical Explication, by contrast, accounts for the inconsistencies in the A-framework in terms of an “essential contradiction.” That is, it explains the apparent plausibility of the A-framework, marked by definite inconsistencies, in terms of the effects of phenomena or states of affairs, as seen from the R-framework, that are themselves somehow confused or contradictory. This is Marx’s substantial addition to what has already been said about explanation on Genetico-Critical Explication. His claim is this: if we find large groups of otherwise rational observers embracing confused sets of ideas, the likeliest explanation is that some real feature of their shared environment is confused (or confusing) in some directly analogous way.

49. Take for example Marx’s claim that “[t]his state, this society, produce religion, an *inverted world-consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*” (175). To say that religion amounts to an “inverted world-consciousness” is just to say that it is a confused or inadequate framework, and thus a candidate A-framework. Marx follows Feuerbach, here, in taking traditional theology to be inadequate just insofar as it projects the core attributes of the human species nature onto God.

How do otherwise rational observers come to accept the religious A-framework? Marx rejects Feuerbach’s psychological explanation, in terms of the vanity of individuals. He substitutes an ethnological explanation. He argues that the religious A-framework takes on its apparent plausibility, for individuals living under liberal democratic systems of governance, because, just as religion involves attributing our true nature to God, under the modern state, “men treat the political life of the state, an area beyond their real individuality, as if it were their true life” (159).

Those living under the liberal state are conditioned to take themselves free just because they have the freedom to own property, even when they in fact own nothing at all. Likewise, they are conditioned to celebrate their share in political franchise, even knowing that it is economic

power, and not the outcome of elections, that decides the shape their lives will take. Through this conditioning, human individuals come to identify less with their own private, economic existence (where eating, sleeping, working, and procreating take place), and more with their imagined, abstract existence as citizens, imbued with various, purely formal rights and freedoms.

50. Note that this is not just a matter of false belief—though beliefs of the sort introduced above are, Marx thinks, false. The institutions and practices that make up social reality also play out as though our abstract, juridical existence were our true existence. The result is that we are treated, in practice, as though we possess goods and powers that we in fact do not. This imbues the day-to-day bustle of life with a deep confusion, interfering with our practical plan-making, and so on.

This real-world disorder—a state of affairs in which things are not as they ought to be—gives an air of plausibility, in turn, to the (ostensible) representational disorder of the religious A-framework. If it is a social fact that the economic sphere in which we carry out the business of our lives does not really count—if only our existence as abstract citizens counts—it is only a small further step to accept that our true existence is our existence in God, divorced from all earthly concerns. The real-world institutional confusion identified by Marx explains the seeming plausibility of the religious A-framework. It is able to do so, on Genetico-Critical Explication, because the real-world confusion stands in direct structural analogy to the conceptual confusion.

51. I shall remain agnostic on the question whether this is a good explanation of the apparent plausibility of the religious A-framework. Anyway, I have omitted any mention of the specific conceptual vocabulary in which Marx frames the point. I will discuss this in the next chapter. For present purposes, however, this brings out the sort of explanation Marx has in mind. In particular,

it helps to distinguish between two sorts of genetic explanation. Marx does not propose to give a genealogy or intellectual history of the ideas he sets out to debunk. He is not especially interested in their historical origin stories. Rather, he sets out to give a genetic explanation of their apparent plausibility, having already shown, through his explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, that they are inadequate to reality. Thus, what Marx sets out to explain, by way of exculpation, is the genesis of our illusions, not the genesis of the contents of those illusions.

52. As I will discuss in the final part of this chapter, the requirement that R-frameworks postulate exactly one real-world confusion to explain each conceptual confusion in the A-framework will turn out to be quite troublesome. I will argue that requiring this isomorphism between R- and A-frameworks plays a role in giving rise to a fairly egregious instance of conceptual accommodation in Marx's own thinking (i.e. his antisemitism, especially in "On the Jewish Question").

53. Thus, Marx takes certain confused or confusing R-framework phenomena to stand in the isomorphy relation to the confusions or inconsistencies we find in the A-framework. He suggests that explaining our (A-framework) conceptual confusions away demands appeal to confusions in reality. It is key, however, that Marx does not take these two confusions to be identical in kind. As Lucio Colletti puts it, "*opposition in reality* is something other than *logical contradiction* or *opposition*" (Colletti 1973: 99; though cf. Hunt 1993: 42-46). Marx does not suppose that mind-independent reality contains inconsistencies of the logical sort—nor that it has propositional form.

This point is important because failure to recognize it has led to many misunderstandings. In particular, both the Marxist-Leninist tradition, beginning with Engels's *Anti-Dühring* (cf. Engels 1987: 110-32) and V. I. Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* (cf. Lenin 1976: 357-61), and

the Critical Theory tradition, beginning with György Lukács's *History and Class-Consciousness* (cf. Lukács 1968a), turn on the unwitting attribution to Marx of Hegel's doctrine that reality has propositional form. I will not enter into this issue here, save to register my view that Marx indeed rejects the doctrine. I refer the reader to Colletti's *Marxism and Hegel*, where he argues that misunderstandings on this point have frustrated Marx scholarship since Engels (cf. Colletti 1973).

3.3. Answer to Marx's Accommodation Argument

54. Allow me to take stock of the results of the first two parts of this chapter. Genetico-Critical Explications retains from Rational Explication its procedure of discovery. It proposes to subject A-frameworks to strict analysis, identifying inconsistencies in the analytic consequence sets for their constitutive principles (cf. §3.10). It then proposes to reform these principles, moving by explicative inference to the nearest non-contradictory permutation of the framework (cf. §3.19). This minimally mutilated successor is Genetico-Critical Explication's proposed R-framework.

Having arrived at this result, Genetico-Critical Explication sets about justifying or rationalizing its proposed R-framework by way of genetic exculpation. That is, it sets out to show that we can explain away the apparent plausibility of the A-framework, in the conceptual vocabulary of the R-framework, as a partial-information response to misleading features of social reality (cf. §3.39). This shows that the A-framework reproduces the appearances (cf. §3.43). In the course of this operation, Genetico-Critical Explication establishes the representational superiority of the R-framework by showing that it can match the descriptive and explanatory successes of the A-framework, while also accounting for its descriptive and explanatory failures (cf. §3.42).

55. With this summary account of Genetico-Critical Explication in view, I will now move to the question how Genetico-Critical Explication proposes to split the horns of the dilemma introduced by Marx's Accommodation Argument. Recall that the explicative inference procedure of justification introduces, by its retention of core contents across explications, the threat of an excessive conservatism (cf. §2.45). This makes Marx's decision to retain explicative inference as his procedure of discovery surprising. If the problem with Rational Explication is that it fails to correct for empirical representational adequacy, why does Marx not replace explicative inference by some procedure that selects concepts directly in terms of their adequacy to empirical inputs?

56. The answer is that Marx takes procedures of this sort to be untenable. That is, he rejects all forms of concept empiricism, which suppose that we can shape our concepts by direct appeal to the deliverances of the senses. Marx takes this commitment over from Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach. In his early writings, he simply takes it for granted. He makes the commitment explicit in later writings (cf. Marx 1986a: 38), but never presents a worked-out argument against naïve empiricism. I will discuss this at length in Ch. 5, where I also reconstruct a coherent argument against concept empiricism, and procedures of justification that rely upon it, from claims in *The German Ideology*.

That having been said, it should be clear already, from the discussion of this chapter, why Marx rejects direct appeals to empirical data. Like many in the scientific realist tradition, he is suspicious of immediate appearances. He takes them to be systematically misleading. Getting things right, for Marx, is not just a matter of describing what we see, as what we see may already be compromised by inadequate theoretical assumptions. It is instead a matter of pushing beyond what we see to the reality that undergirds and explains it (i.e. it is a theoretical enterprise).

57. There are other reasons, of course, why Marx elects to retain explicative inference as his procedure of discovery. Doing so allows Genetico-Critical Explication to retain Rational Explication's discursive-continuity-based solution to the Continuity Problem (cf. §1.71), as well as its self-conception as a perennial method (cf. §1.62), and as a method of internal criticism (cf. §1.74). Genetico-Critical Explication is Marx's effort to correct against the limitations of Rational Explication, while retaining its promise and its virtues as a perennial method in philosophy.

58. Thus, Marx does not propose to bite the bullet on conceptual accommodation. He takes his solution to secure against it. By introducing genetic exculpation as an additional constraint on justification, such that only frameworks capable of genetically exculpating their A-framework predecessors count as viable R-frameworks, Genetico-Critical Explication aims to narrow the set of genuine candidate R-frameworks to those which improve not only on the logical and semantical consistency of the A-framework, but also on its representational adequacy. Thus, Genetico-Critical Explication accepts the same pool of candidate conceptual reforms as Rational Explication, but winnows that selection down with the aim of correcting against representational error.

Thus, just as Rational Explication, applied iteratively, should, in the fullness of time, correct against all logical and semantical inconsistencies, Genetico-Critical Explication, likewise applied iteratively and on a long enough timeline, should correct against all conceptual accommodations (in the relevant pool of candidates). This, then, is the means by which Marx proposes to split the horns of the dilemma introduced by his own Accommodation Argument.

59. As shown just above (cf. §3.49), Marx often uses the term "inverted" or "inversion" to characterize both (i) the logical, semantical, and representational inadequacies against which

Genetico-Critical Explication is designed to correct; and (ii) the instances of real-world disorder that stand in analogy or isomorphy relation to those inadequacies, and serve to explain their illusory plausibility. It is with this sense of inversion in mind that Marx later claims that Hegel's method is "standing on its head," such that it "must be turned right side up again" (Marx 1996: 19). Likewise, Engels claims, in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, that through Marx's intervention, "Hegelian dialectic was placed upon its head; or rather, turned off its head, on which it was standing, and placed upon its feet" (Engels 1990: 383).

60. In each of the above cases, the figure of inversion clearly references Feuerbach's characterization of his own method in *The Essence of Christianity*. As you will recall, he argues there that Christian theology confusedly attributes the predicates proper to the human species to the imaginary subject God (cf. §3.32): "The all-powerful is X, Y, Z." Feuerbach suggests that we should instead recognize God as a property of humanity (i.e. as something that supervenes on human activity), and thus transform the subject God into a predicate, while transforming the cluster of predicates attributed to God into a single subject, humanity: "Humanity is all-powerful."

Thus, Feuerbach writes that "that which in religion is the predicate we must make the subject, and that which in religion is a subject we must make a predicate, thus inverting the oracles of religion; and by this means we arrive at the truth" (Feuerbach 1989: 60). Now, if Feuerbach in fact thinks that we can arrive at truth just by inverting the subject-predicate order of the claims we find in Hegel, or in the Holy Catechism, it is clear that his method will not survive the Accommodation Argument. There is no surer way to preserve an A-framework's inadequate representational commitments across reforms than to treat that framework's vocabulary of subject and predicate concepts as sacrosanct, modifying only their positions relative to the copula.

61. Marx, too, makes frequent appeal to the rhetorical figure of inversion. He writes, for instance, that “Hegel everywhere makes the idea the subject and turns the proper, the actual subject, such as ‘political conviction’, into a predicate” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 11). Some readers have taken Feuerbach and Marx very literally on this point, coming away with the bizarre and unflattering idea that Genetico-Critical Explication is concerned simply to reverse subject-predicate order.

Robert Tucker, the paradigm representative of this trend, attributes what he calls “transformational criticism” or “the method of inversion” to both Marx and Feuerbach (cf. Tucker 1972: 86-87, 96-98; 1978: xxiii). One finds similar attributions even in otherwise sophisticated reconstructions (cf. Althusser 1969c: 33 fn 35; Suchting 1983: 21; Arthur 1983: 19 fn 34; Murray 1988: 28). However, the procedure of transposing subject and predicate is totally arbitrary in its results (e.g. “the mind is supervenient” becomes the nonsense claim “supervenience is mental”), and unsuited to philosophy. Those who attribute the method to Feuerbach and Marx seem not to reflect in doing so that, if their attributions were correct, this would disqualify both philosophers’ views from serious consideration. In effect, it would mean that neither has any arguments at all.

62. Luckily, neither Marx nor Feuerbach in fact deploy the method of inversion. Feuerbach does not arrive at his considered views by inverting the subject-predicate order of sentences he finds in the Holy Catechism. As discussed above (cf. §§3.19, 3.32-34), he subjects the concepts of traditional theology (as well as those of previous philosophers) to careful explication, and derives his own framework by explicative inference. The rhetorical figure of inversion describes the outcome of this explication: Feuerbach’s proposed R-framework lines up, relative to the A-framework be begins by criticizing, in the relation of subject-predicate inversion.

This neat figure of contrast, however, is fairly incidental, though Feuerbach himself makes much of it. His explication would constitute a correction against the principles constitutive of traditional theology even if it did not involve any subject-predicate inversion of those principles.

63. Likewise, Engels makes clear, in his preface to *Capital*, Vol. 2, that “inversion” is simply a metaphor for theory succession—for the replacement of one framework by another. Thus, he writes that, in supplanting Priestley and Scheele’s phlogistic theory of combustion by his own, more adequate oxygen theory, Lavoisier “placed all chemistry, which in its phlogistic form had stood on its head, squarely on its feet” (Engels 1997: 20). Lavoisier’s theory is an inversion of the phlogiston theory, but one that involves no subject-predicate reversal, for his proposed successor does not invert <phlogiston> across the copula, but involves the concept not at all.

In what, then, does the inversion consist? Engels goes on to claim that, through his discoveries in *Capital*, “Marx stands in the same relation to his predecessors in the theory of surplus value as Lavoisier stood to Priestley and Scheele,” where this just means that Marx takes “a view directly opposite to that of all his predecessors,” in the sense that “[w]here they had seen a *solution*, he only [sees] a problem” (20; and cf. Althusser 1969b: 157-58; Althusser and Balibar 1970: 149-55). Thus, while his predecessors accept the A-framework as adequate, Marx recognizes it as inadequate, and as posing a problem or puzzle of the sort described above (cf. §3.36).

64. To invert an A-framework, therefore, is just to replace it by an R-framework—and in particular to replace it by an R-framework capable of explaining how that A-framework should ever have come to preponderance. In the passage just cited, Engels is concerned to describe the upshot of

Marx's *Capital*. The characterization of inversion he gives, however, holds both for Genetico-Critical Explication, and for Marx's more mature method (which I will reconstruct in Ch. 6).

Where Genetico-Critical Explication is concerned, to say that Marx aims to invert (say) Hegel just means that he aims to build upon the representational successes of Hegel's A-framework, while also correcting against its failings. He proposes to derive his own, more adequate R-framework from that A-framework by explicative inference, and then to account, by way of genetic exculpation, for the apparent plausibility of the A-framework. Accordingly, what functions as a solution for Hegel (i.e. the A-framework) is a problem or puzzle for Marx. It follows that every successful application of the Genetico-Critical Explication method amounts to inversion.

65. In Ch. 5, I will argue that Genetico-Critical Explication's hybrid, horn-splitting solution to the dilemma raised by Marx's Accommodation Argument is ultimately unsuccessful. In particular, I will argue that Marx recognizes, by the time of *The German Ideology*, that Genetico-Critical Explication still suffers from the same sort of conservatism problem that plagues Rational Explication. For present purposes, however, it has been enough to establish with some plausibility why Marx takes his early method to resolve the problem raised by his Accommodation Argument.

3.4. Case Study: On the Jewish Question

66. In the next chapter, I will reconstruct the argument of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* along the lines of Genetico-Critical Explication. The argumentative structure of the manuscripts is obscure, and includes important gaps in reasoning. My aim will be to show how approaching Marx's writings with a clear idea of his intended method can improve our understanding of his first-order views.

Before relying on Genetico-Critical Explication as a guide in reconstructing Marx's more obscure (and unpublished) writings, however, I will show how this method informs the structure of one of Marx's less controversial (published) texts, "On the Jewish Question." This will serve as evidence that Marx in fact deploys Genetico-Critical Explication in his first-order theorizing, and thus will help to secure the ground for the more speculative bit of reconstruction to come. It will also allow me to anticipate a cluster of key worries about Genetico-Critical Explication.

67. Marx's "On the Jewish Question" consists of two review articles, discussing two works by Bruno Bauer: his monograph, *The Jewish Question* (cf. Bauer 1843b), and a short article, "The Capacity of Today's Jews and Christians to Become Free" (Bauer 1843a). The Jewish Question is the question of what legal status Jews should enjoy after the collapse of the Prussian estates system (cf. §2.4). In particular, it concerns the question whether adherence to halakha—the system of religious law deriving from the Torah and the Talmud—prevents an individual from reliably discharging the duties of citizenship under the Prussian state. In this context, a Jew is a Jew not because of personal ancestry, or ethnic background, but just in virtue of conforming to halakha.

68. In his works on the Jewish Question, Bauer employs a method like Rational Explication to criticize earlier approaches to the issue. In the process, he produces a new framework. As Marx writes, "Bauer ... pose[s] the question of Jewish emancipation in a new form, after giving a critical analysis of the previous formulations and solutions to the question" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 147). Bauer is committed to an essentialist explanatory strategy: he takes it that developments within a population must be explained in terms of the nature or essence of that population. Thus, as Marx

summarizes, Bauer holds that “[b]y *its very nature*, the Christian state is incapable of emancipating the Jew,” and likewise “by his very nature the Jew cannot be emancipated” (147).

69. It is the essence of the Jewish individual, on Bauer’s view, to conform to halakha. Likewise, it is the essence of the Christian state to enforce Christian law. These two systems of law are incompatible. Bauer concludes, accordingly, that the only way to emancipate the Jews is by abolishing both Christianity and Judaism. Reconstructing Bauer’s framework, Marx writes that

[t]he most rigid form of the opposition between the Jew and the Christian is the *religious* opposition. How is an opposition resolved? By making it impossible. How is *religious* opposition made impossible? By *abolishing* religion (147).

The state must throw off its specifically Christian values and practices, and become a state without qualification. So too the Jews must throw off halakha, and become citizens without qualification.

Thus, only by the emancipation of all Prussians (i.e. by the abolition of official state religion) is the emancipation of Jewish individuals made possible—and even then, it is only possible on condition that these individuals cease to be Jews (i.e. cease to conform to halakha).

70. Marx treats Bauer’s framework as an A-framework, and subjects it to strict analysis. He claims that Bauer’s concept of <emancipation> is defective. In particular, he points out that Bauer fails to investigate “[w]hat kind of *emancipation* is in question” (149). Moreover, Marx claims explicitly that “[b]ecause Bauer does not raise the question to this level, he becomes entangled in contradictions” (149). In the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx brings out dozens of specific inconsistencies that emerge from Hegel’s defective concept of <state> (cf. §3.10). Unfortunately, he does not display the same attention to detail in “On the Jewish Question.” He fails to show his work (i.e. by identifying the exact inconsistencies at issue).

Nevertheless, he makes clear that he understands his strict analysis of Bauer's A-framework to culminate in the identification of definite inconsistencies in the latter's concept of <emancipation>.

71. Marx then moves, by explicative inference, to that framework nearest to Bauer's which corrects the inconsistencies he identifies. In particular, Marx's framework replaces Bauer's defective concept of <emancipation> by a pair of concepts. Marx writes that "[t]he question of the *relation of political emancipation to religion* becomes for us the question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 151).

Thus, Marx defends a candidate R-framework on which <political emancipation> and <human emancipation> are distinguished. In the context of religion, political emancipation occurs when the state ceases to declare a national religion. This act institutes the civil freedom of religion. It does not, however, abolish religion. Marx points out that the United States of America is at once "the country of complete political emancipation" and "pre-eminently the country of religiosity" (151). Through political emancipation, religion is not removed from our lives, but removed to the private sphere, where it circulates and develops unchecked by any centralized authority. True human emancipation, Marx claims, would involve the genuine and permanent abolition of religion.

72. Marx retains much of Bauer's A-framework on his proposed R-framework. He retains Bauer's view that the Jewish Question can be resolved only through the abolition of religion. He also retains Bauer's essentialist explanatory strategy, as will soon become clear. These retentions are not necessarily conceptual accommodations. First, though they closely reproduce Bauer's commitments, each R-framework concept enters into relations with Marx's reformed concepts of <political emancipation> and <human emancipation>, and therefore possesses a different total set

of conceptual relations than its analogous concept on Bauer's A-framework. It follows that Marx's concepts are not exactly those of Bauer. This is a consequence of Marx's holism (cf. §3.14).

Second, those individual principles, constitutive of concepts, which Marx does take over from Bauer are (presumably) just those that survive rational scrutiny—principles that involve no logical or semantical inconsistencies. Such principles are retained across explicative inference.

73. Genetico-Critical Explication retains from Rational Explication its strategy of dissolving A-frameworks into their R-framework successors (cf. §2.38). This holdover is present already in Feuerbach's version of the method. Feuerbach favors talk of "reduction," but makes his intentions on this point clear: he sets out to "reduce theology to anthropology," first by "*evolving* [anthropology] out of the very core of religion" (Feuerbach 1989: xxiii), then by genetically exculpating traditional theology, explaining its seeming plausibility away as an optical illusion.

Marx writes, in the same spirit, that it is his aim to "turn theological questions into secular ones" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 151) and claims that "the Jewish question ultimately reduces itself" to the conflict "between the political state and its preconditions" (154). Marx suggests that the Jewish Question, both on its traditional interpretations, and on Bauer's novel A-framework interpretation, admits of an intelligible answer only once translated into the conceptual vocabulary of his proposed R-framework. Thus, Bauer's A-framework is dissolved into Marx's R-framework.

74. The relations of reductive or dissolutive priority that Marx establishes between frameworks in the course of this explication mirror the relations of explanatory priority that will undergird his later genetic exculpation of Bauer's framework. Bauer's A-framework dissolves into Marx's R-framework just as theological questions dissolve into secular ones. Likewise, Marx's R-framework

describes the cause or genesis of Bauer's A-framework just as "[w]e no longer regard religion as the *cause*, but only as the manifestation of secular narrowness" and "[t]herefore we explain the religious limitations of the free citizens by their secular limitations" (151). Thus, we can scent the explanatory strategy Marx will pursue already in the shape of his explication of Bauer.

75. Marx's genetic exculpation of Bauer depends essentially on the claim that Bauer is guilty of a kind of conceptual accommodation. In particular, Marx claims that "Bauer ... transforms the question of Jewish emancipation into a purely religious question" (168). This means that he accepts the religious self-understanding of Jewish individuals as their true essence. The suggestion is that, though Bauer explicates previous theological frameworks in an effort to correct against their inadequacies, he in fact retains a host of empirically inadequate commitments across explications, and these commitments come to bear on his definitions. Bauer defines <Jew> in theological terms (i.e. in terms of halakha) because he finds a definition of this sort ready-made in the framework he explicates. He simply takes it over, correcting for consistency but not for representational fit. Thus, Marx takes Bauer's A-framework to be an A-framework because it reproduces the appearances.

76. It follows that the ability of Marx's R-framework to explain the genesis of Bauer's A-framework depends on the relationship between concepts within Marx's R-framework. It is because theological facts relate in such-and-such a way to secular facts on Marx's R-framework that Bauer's A-framework, understood as residually theological, can be explained away on the same pattern as, for example, the Catholic belief in the transubstantiation of the host.

Marx proposes to explain the apparent plausibility of the appearance (i.e. ostensible Jewish self-understanding) preserved as core content on Bauer's A-framework in terms of a directly

analogous real-world confusion. In particular, he proposes to explain the illusory definition of <Jew> accepted by Bauer in terms of the true, underlying essence of the Jewish individual. He writes that we should not “look for the secret of the Jew in his religion, but ... look for the secret of his religion in the real Jew” (169). Marx proposes to explain the theological self-understanding of Jewish individuals in terms of their secular existence, understood as their true essence.

77. Marx defines this “practical, real Judaism” in terms of a cluster of behavioral dispositions, all tied up with “*huckstering and money*” (170). This definition surely springs from Marx’s personal antisemitism. Some readers have argued that it is not perniciously antisemitic. Such readings are often motivated by the idea that Marx just means to explain the conceptual confusions incumbent to Jewish self-understanding in terms of the real-world confusions of capitalism. Thus, Marx claims that “[t]he Jew, who exists as a distinct member of civil society, is only a particular manifestation of the Judaism of civil society” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 171).

To excuse Marx from the charge of pernicious antisemitism, however, we would also have to accept that his use of the term “Judaism of civil society” to mean economic exploitation is only an instance of casual antisemitism (cf. Avineri 2019: Ch. 3). On this reading, Marx does not mean to define capitalism as economic Judaism. He uses the term “Judaism” in a flip way, referring to the real-world practices of huckstering and money-lending, because Judaism is stereotypically associated with such practices. Thus, Marx does not give a one-one explanation of theological Judaism in terms of economic Judaism, but a one-many explanation of Judaism (and all other theological phenomena) in terms of capitalism. His use of antisemitic language, then, is incidental.

78. Interpretations of the above sort overlook Marx's requirement that the explanations involved in genetic exculpation generate one-one isomorphies between *explananda* and *explanantia* (cf. §3.48). Marx may well want to give a one-many explanation of Jewish self-understanding, and (by extension) of Bauer's A-framework, but his method precludes him from doing so.

Marx writes that, though the Judaism of civil-society participates in "a general *anti-social* element of the *present time*," it is "the *supreme practical* expression of human self-estrangement" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 170), and thus stands out from the rest. Marx does not use the term "Judaism" as a superficial moniker for capitalism. The explanation goes the other way. He makes clear that, under capitalism, "the real nature of the Jew has been universally realised" (174). The real-world Jewish essence, therefore, stands in one-one analogy with Jewish self-understanding.

79. Despite his Jewish ancestry, Marx's writings are littered with antisemitic remarks (cf. 168-70; but also 1977b: 355, 370; 1977a: 32). This, however, is the only instance (that I know of) in which he incorporates antisemitic beliefs into his "official" first-order theorizing. In keeping with Marx's own suggestion that we criticize methods of criticism rather than the individual conscience (cf. §2.37), I propose to turn away from the question whether Marx is an antisemite—he clearly is—and take up the question which aspect of Genetico-Critical Explication is responsible for allowing his antisemitism to shape his proposed R-framework. I hope to have shown that Marx's one-one isomorphy requirement for genetic exculpations plays a significant role in bringing this about.

80. How does the one-one isomorphy requirement give rise to accommodation? It places arbitrary constraints on the numerical relationship between A-framework concepts and their R-framework analogues. On this point, Marx fails to heed Kant's warning, for instance, that we cannot know,

from the appearances alone, whether those appearances stand in one-one, one-many, or some other polyadic relation to the things-in-themselves that function as their grounds (cf. Kant 2002b: 8:209). This incapacity is sometimes referred to as “numerical ignorance” (cf. Stratmann 2018: 10-11).

Thus, Marx’s requirement that genetic exculpations establish one-to-one isomorphy between real-world confusions and the conceptual confusions they explain away involves a failure to take stock of the numerical ignorance of those occupying the A-framework. More importantly, it imposes an uncritical requirement on the structure of candidate R-frameworks, and thus uncritically smuggles features of the A-framework ontology into the R-framework. Unfortunately, Marx retains some version of this requirement, with varying levels of explicitness, even on his mature method. I will discuss this error again in Ch. 6, as (unhappily) Marx fails to correct it.

81. Accommodations aside, Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” conforms closely to the pattern of Genetico-Critical Explication. Marx begins by subjecting Bauer’s A-framework to strict analysis. He derives some (unspecified) set of inconsistencies, pertaining in particular to Bauer’s concept of <emancipation>. He then moves, by explicative inference, to his own candidate R-framework, on which Bauer’s concept of <emancipation> is replaced by two disambiguated concepts. This move constitutes the dissolution of Bauer’s A-framework into Marx’s R-framework. Marx then shows that Bauer’s A-framework reflects the appearances, insofar as it takes the (ostensible) Jewish self-understanding for granted. Marx concludes his criticism by providing a genetic exculpation of Bauer, and the religious self-understanding it takes for granted. He explains these away as optical illusions given rise to by the economic behavior of Jewish individuals, as described on the R-framework—a function of Marx’s antisemitic conception of the Jewish essence.

Chapter 4 – The Explication of <Man> in the Early Marx

1. The *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* count among Marx's most influential writings. They also count among his most obscure. The political theorist Marcello Musto argues that the *Manuscripts* are so inchoate both in content and in structure that they fail to articulate any one definite theory (cf. Musto 2015). I take a rosier view. I believe that the obstacles to arriving at a clear understanding of the candidate R-framework defended by the early Marx can be overcome.

My aim, in this chapter, is to reconstruct Marx's application of Genetico-Critical Explication in the *1844 Manuscripts*. This means that I am concerned, first and foremost, to reconstruct Marx's arguments. There are real difficulties involved in grasping the argumentative structure of the *Manuscripts*. Many of Marx's claims resist disambiguation, and the surface structure of his arguments is not always obvious. I maintain, however, that these problems arise at the epistemic rather than the semantic level. Marx's claims are not irreducibly ambiguous.

2. Two things are needed before we can begin to reconstruct the arguments of the *1844 Manuscripts* with some confidence. First, we need a theory of Marx's intended strategy of argument, supported by evidence from works are both (i) actually published; and (ii) less elliptical in presentation than the *Manuscripts* themselves. I developed just such a theory in the previous chapter, identifying the basic principles of Marx's early method, Genetico-Critical Explication.

3. Second, we need a plausible story about the stakes of the conversation to which the *Manuscripts* contribute. Thus, we need some sense of intellectual context. When Marx announces his commitment to some view or other, we need to know what relevant alternatives are being excluded. This is roughly the approach to the history of philosophy advertised in the epigraph to this

dissertation. I shall devote the first part of the chapter to a survey of the core debates that motivate the *1844 Manuscripts*. I will discuss Marx's philosophical motivations (i.e. what he wishes to accomplish by his arguments, which objectives are not to be mistaken for arguments themselves); and I will provide a brief sketch, in light of all this, of the positive views Marx comes to defend.

In particular, I will argue that Marx's objective in the *1844 Manuscripts* is to introduce and defend a new concept of <man> or <human being> (i.e. a new anthropology). In the course of this discussion, I will take position on controversial exegetical issues that do not follow necessarily from the broader methodological points I argue for in this dissertation. Thus, philosophers who disagree with me about Marx's first-order commitments might still agree with me about his method. It is necessary to take some stance on these issues in order even to say what Marx's theories are about. This is not the place, however, to provide extended argument in favor of my interpretation of the first-order views. Accordingly, I will cover these issues with a broad brush.

4. In the remainder of the chapter, with Marx's method and motivations both in view, I will reconstruct the central argument of the *1844 Manuscripts*. I will begin by introducing Marx's explication of the classical political economists' concept of <man>. I will argue that Marx's criticism of political economy hews to the pattern of the Genetico-Critical Explication method. In particular, Marx subjects the political economists' concept of <man> to strict analysis, he derives a replacement concept by explicative inference, and he develops a genetic exculpation, from the perspective of his proposed R-framework, explaining the political economists' framework away.

5. In the course of my reconstruction, it will come out that Marx's explication of <man> relies on conceptual resources that his explicit arguments do not entitle him to. This is one of the reasons

why the arguments of the *1844 Manuscripts* can seem obscure. In the final two parts of the chapter, I will argue that Marx's reliance on these unargued-for concepts is not by design (i.e. he does not take the concepts to be innate, or to be available to us without argument). I will also argue, however, that we should not think of this as a dogmatic error. Marx does not fail to consider the legitimacy and provenance of the concepts he deploys. Instead, we should think of this as an error of omission. Marx's *Manuscripts* are unfinished. In the form we have them in, elements of Marx's central argument are omitted, leaving it in uncritical (and incoherent, on close inspection) shape.

I will argue, however, that we can use Genetico-Critical Explication as a guide to reconstruct two auxiliary arguments which serve, together, to justify the introduction of the conceptual resources presupposed by Marx's explication of <man>. These auxiliary arguments function as hidden premises in Marx's explicit argument. I will show that my proposed reconstruction solves some recalcitrant exegetical puzzles about the *1844 Manuscripts*, especially concerning Marx's ambivalent relationship to the ideas of both Hegel and Feuerbach.

4.1. Naturalism and Anthropology

6. The *1844 Manuscripts* contain Marx's only explicit reference to himself as a naturalist. Using the term "naturalism," however, Marx does not mean to describe those aspects of Genetico-Critical Explication that are methodologically naturalistic (e.g. its genetic-exculpation-based procedure of justification). Here, Marx identifies "naturalism" with both "humanism" and "communism," (Marx and Engels 1975a: 296) and argues that "only naturalism is capable of comprehending the action of world history" (303). Thus, Marx's naturalism, in the *Manuscripts*, is not a theory of philosophical method, but a first-order theory of the definite causes of historical development.

7. More exactly, Marx's aim, in articulating his "naturalism," is to give an account of "the evolution of mankind" (241). He does not mean to discuss the biological evolution of the human species. At the time of the *1844 Manuscripts*, with Darwin's epoch-making *On the Origin of Species* still far out in the future, Marx is unimpressed by existing efforts to provide a genetic account of the human species. He even (somewhat bizarrely) rejects the question of human origins as a pseudo-question, using a style of argumentation perhaps borrowed from Otto Friedrich Gruppe (cf. §3.26).¹ Thus, Marx claims that the question "[w]ho begot the first man, and nature as a whole" does not admit of an answer, because it is "wrongly put" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 305; and cf. Feuerbach 2012a: 293). He is not interested in human evolution as a question of human origins.

8. What, then, is the relevant sense of "evolution"? Marx gives us a clue by drawing an analogy between his own theory of human evolution, and the science of "geognosy," being "the science which presents the formation of the earth, the development of the earth, as a process, as a self-generation" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 304-05). Geognosy studies the development of geological phenomena (e.g. the formation of rocks, or the stratification of the Earth's crust), but not the genesis of planets. It is not concerned with how geological phenomena come to be, but with how geological phenomena come to be just as they are (cf. Guntau 2009).

Likewise, Marx does not propose to explain how human beings emerge from an underlying non-anthropological nature. Instead, he defines his object of study as "anthropological nature" itself (Marx and Engels 1975a: 303). Human evolution is an intra-anthropological phenomenon.

¹ To be clear, Marx's rejection of the question of human origins is bizarre just until we understand the essentialist commitments, and the style of argument that undergird that rejection. Thus, Collier (2004, p. 22) is puzzled by Marx's rejection of the issue, while Cloeren (1987), who attends to the influence of Gruppe, is not.

9. For Marx, understanding something as a natural phenomenon means, in part, understanding it as subject to natural laws, and thus as subject to development over time in accordance with those laws. To study the “evolution of mankind,” therefore, is to identify the laws that explain the observed activity of the human species, in order to grasp why human institutions and culture develop over time in the ways that they do. Marx’s object of study, then, is what the Enlightenment economist Anne Robert Jacques Turgot calls “universal history”:

the consideration of the successive progress of humanity, and the detailed causes which have contributed to it: the earliest beginnings of man, the formation and mixture of nations; the origins and revolutions of government; the development of language; of morality, customs, arts and sciences; the revolutions which have brought about the succession of empires, nations, and religions (Turgot 1844: 627; translated in Harris 1968: 14).

Thus, Marx’s high praise for naturalism (as the only theory “capable of comprehending the action of world history”) just amounts to the claim that only by treating the human species as a natural phenomenon can we develop an adequate anthropology (i.e. an adequate concept of <man>).

Marx’s project in the *1844 Manuscripts* just is to develop an adequate anthropology, where this means arriving at a concept of <man> sufficient to account for the subject matter of universal history. We can arrive at a better grasp of Marx’s early anthropology, and of his motives for defending it, by examining a handful of historically relevant alternative concepts of <man>.

10. In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant defines anthropology as “knowledge of the human being, systematically formulated” (Kant 2006). He goes on to distinguish two sub-disciplines: “physiological” anthropology, which “concerns the investigation of what *nature* makes of the human being,” and “pragmatic” anthropology, which is “the investigation of what *he* as a free-acting being makes of himself, or can and should make of

himself' (3). As the title of his work suggests, Kant is concerned with pragmatic anthropology, understood as a normative discipline: he sets out to identify the ideal that humanity approximates.

11. In his *Lectures on Anthropology*, Kant brings his pragmatic anthropology to bear on the topic of universal history, or human evolution. In the *Menschenkunde*, for instance, he claims that “the human being is an animal that can perfect itself” (2012: 328). Likewise, in the *Anthropology* Friedländer, he argues that “[i]nnate to human nature are germs which develop and can achieve the perfection for which they are determined” (227), characterizing “the advance of the perfection of the human condition” as an evolution “from the [state of] savagery up to the highest perfection of the civil constitution” (225; brackets in original).

Kant understands the evolution of the human species nature in terms of the perfection of four predispositions: toward the satisfaction of basic needs, toward effective means-end reasoning, toward prudence, and toward moral conduct (cf. Wood 2003: 52). He holds that it is a mistake to define <man> in terms of any single stage in the evolution of these predispositions. Thus, he claims in the *Anthropology* Pillau that “[w]hat is authentic in the human being is hard to make out from the present and past appearance; for we find only the constitution of the predispositions that are there now” (Kant 2012: 273). This observation functions to explain Kant’s attention to pragmatic anthropology: we cannot define <man> in terms of how he is, only in terms of how he ought to be.

12. In addition to universal history, Kant’s anthropological reflections address such topics as the operation of the five senses (cf. 2006: 45), boredom (cf. 128), and the role of imagination in dreams (cf. 82). This might suggest to the modern reader that the science Kant pursues under the name “anthropology” is in fact distinct from anthropology as we know it. At times this is true in practice,

but the claim obscures a deeper point. Like any other anthropologist, Kant sets out to study human beings. That is, he hopes to arrive, in time, at a representationally adequate definition of <man>.

Fixing the subject matter of anthropological investigation, however, requires that the anthropologist make some preliminary assumptions about what a human being is. At the very top of the *Anthropology*, Kant remarks that “[t]he fact that the human being can have the ‘I’ in his representations [i.e., the fact that he can become self-conscious] raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth” (15). It follows that studying human beings means studying self-consciousness. This nominal definition of <man> (cf. §1.23) shapes Kant’s study from the start.

13. In his three *Critiques*, Kant studies the laws that govern self-consciousness at a purely formal level. In his *Anthropology*, he studies self-consciousness as it is realized historically, in individual human beings. In both cases, his subject matter is self-consciousness. Thus, Kant endorses a psychological definition of <man>, insofar as he defines <man> in terms of self-consciousness. However, he also takes self-consciousness to resist efforts at naturalistic explanation. It follows that his definition of <man> is both psychological and anti-naturalistic in character.

14. In the “Anthropology” section of the Subjective Spirit (i.e. the first part of the third book of his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*), Hegel takes issue with Kant’s anti-naturalism. Kant excludes habit, or acquired disposition, from anthropology, for the reason that habit makes only a causal and not a rationalizing contribution to the explanation of human behavior, and thus belongs wholly to the animal and not to the human nature (cf. Kant 2006: 40).

Hegel, by contrast, claims that habit is the distinguishing feature of the human being, and thus that the human being is a natural being. Still, he claims that “[h]abit is not an *immediate*, first

nature,” like the purely instinctual nature of the mollusk or the sea sponge, but “a *second nature posited* by soul” (Hegel 2007: 134). At a certain point, enculturation into complex systems of habit gives rise, Hegel thinks, to self-consciousness. It is only in virtue of giving rise to self-consciousness that habit can function as the distinguishing feature of the human being.

15. Thus, despite his opposition to Kant’s rigid anti-naturalism, Hegel retains the latter’s nominal definition of <man> in terms of self-consciousness. He makes clear that even the embodied human being is “the self or the I” which “*intuits its own self* in its *Other* [i.e., in its body] and is *this self-intuiting*” (141). Moreover, having emerged, self-consciousness acquires independence from the natural facts that give rise to it. Accordingly, like Kant, Hegel thinks that self-consciousness resists all efforts at naturalistic explanation. Hegel’s naturalism in anthropology is attenuated, therefore, by his anti-naturalism in psychology, giving rise to what Robert Pippin calls “mixed explanations” (Pippin 2019: 360). These attenuations follow from Hegel’s non-natural definition of <man>.

16. Further, on Hegel’s understanding, the self-conscious human being has as its purpose the realization of maximally adequate, maximally rational self-consciousness—an ideal Hegel refers to as “God.” A human being is what it is just in virtue of more or less successfully realizing the nature of God. Thus, Hegel claims that “human beings are implicitly spirit and rationality, created in and after the image of God” (Hegel 1988). One upshot is that studying human beings, on Hegel’s account, requires studying the ideal at which their activity aims: God. Thus, anthropology presupposes, and in some sense reduces to, theology. Hegel’s concept of <God> is highly idiosyncratic (i.e. his God is not the God of any traditional faith), but it is full-bloodedly non-natural, and plays a decisive role both in his anthropology and elsewhere (cf. Beiser 2005: Ch. 6).

17. The theological dimension of Hegel's anthropology is especially visible in his treatment of universal history (or human evolution) in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Human individuals' progress toward realizing the nature of God occurs both over the course of their lives (cf. Hegel 2007: 53-62), and over the course of history. Like Kant, Hegel claims that "[m]an ... is his own product; he is the sum total of his own deeds, and has made himself what he is" (1975: 96). Likewise, he holds that "the history of the world is a rational process," characterized by "evolution" (29) and "progress" (61). He makes equally clear, however, that "the divine being" is "the essence of man" (53), and that "[h]istory is the unfolding of God's nature" (42).

In any given epoch, humanity will possess a given degree of self-consciousness, more or less resembling God's true self-consciousness. Hegel reiterates that "God has created man in his own image," claiming that "[m]an must therefore become what he is intended to be; that is, he must fulfil his destiny as a rational being" (216). As nations rise and fall, the human second nature—understood as the habituated cultural or spiritual life of the species—grows more sophisticated. Accordingly, Hegel maintains that human evolution is possible only at the level of second nature. He claims (contra Darwin, for instance) that "[i]n the natural world, the species does not progress," while "in the world of the spirit, each change is a form of progress" (128).²

18. Feuerbach, in turn, is sympathetic to Hegel's criticism of Kant's anti-naturalism. He also holds, however, that Hegel's theological concept of <man> enjoins a theological anthropology, just as Kant's psychological concept of <man> enjoins a psychological anthropology, and rejects the approach on the ground that theology is a confused or vacuous science.

² Efforts have been made to save Hegel from himself on this count. See Krahn (2019) and Lindquist (2020).

As discussed in Ch. 3, Feuerbach holds that the perfect being studied by the theologian is a confused representation of the human species nature itself (cf. §§3.32-34). Feuerbach retains from Hegel the idea that individual human beings are imperfect realizations of an ideal. He defines this ideal, however, not in theological terms, but directly in terms of the human species nature (i.e. in terms of a definite biological kind). Thus, Feuerbach defends a vision of anthropology modeled in part on Linnaean taxonomic biology (cf. Feuerbach 2012d: 241). Like both Kant and Hegel, he maintains that the human being is set apart by its self-consciousness, but he proposes to explain human self-consciousness as a byproduct of humanity's biological constitution (cf. 227).

19. Feuerbach's occasional reflections on universal history are informed by his retention of Hegel's static (i.e. non-evolutionary) conception of biological kinds. He claims, for instance, that "[t]he history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits, which at a given time pass for the limits of humanity" (Feuerbach 1989: 153). These are never true limits, for the reason that humanity has, in every epoch, the same species nature.

Thus, Feuerbach rejects Hegel's emphasis on the "striking differences of various religions, philosophies, times, and peoples," focusing instead on "all that is common and identical in all of them"—their shared status as expressions of the human species nature (Feuerbach 2012e: 54). Feuerbach denies the possibility of substantial human evolution. He does countenance cultural progress, but he understands it in terms of individuals collectively throwing off misconceptions about their unchanging species nature (cf. Feuerbach 2012d: 233; Brudney 1998: 43-44, 197-98). Regrettably, he gives little account of how human nature is supposed to account for this progress.

20. Marx, in turn, borrows a great deal from Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's anthropology. He agrees, for instance, that the principal error haunting Hegel's anthropology is that "[f]or Hegel the *human being—man—equals self-consciousness,*" where self-consciousness is defined in theological terms (Marx and Engels 1975a: 334). Marx takes it as one desideratum for an adequate anthropology that it account for the human being in non-theological terms. However, he also takes issue with Feuerbach's failure to give a satisfactory account of human evolution. Thus, his second desideratum for an adequate anthropology is that it must account for the subject matter of universal history. The problem that motivates Marx's early anthropology, then, is this: How can the anthropologist account both for the naturalness of the human being (*a la* Feuerbach), and for its development in history (*a la* Hegel)? Marx's solution turns on three technical innovations.

21. First, Marx claims that the human species nature must be understood, at least in part, in economic terms. Because we are natural beings, we depend on our natural environment. Moreover, the specificities of our environment determine the specificities of our nature (336-37). Human beings with easy access to high-nutrition foods will live vastly different lives from those forced to sustain themselves on low-nutrition foods that are difficult to extract. To this, Marx adds this further observation: human activity modifies the natural environment (336). Trivially, offloading industrial waste into irrigation canals will diminish the environment's ability to meet our needs, while introducing modern agricultural techniques and higher-yield wheat varieties will enhance its ability to meet them. Our productive activity modifies the environment, and the environment acts back upon us, deciding the specificities of our nature; thus, human activity shapes human nature.

22. Further, human productive activity is always organized, in one way or another, through both cooperation and conflict. We coordinate our productive activity to meet the needs of others, and we also force certain groups to do a disproportionate share of the work so we can devote ourselves to other things. The productive activity available to me as an individual is limited by the natural resources available to me (273), and by social facts about my historical situation. The course of action I pursue to satisfy my hunger will vary considerably depending on whether I live in (say) a pre-agrarian hunter-gatherer society or a modern, liberal-democratic consumer-capitalist society.

Marx understands these differences in terms of different stages in the development of “industry” (302-03) and the “division of labour” (317-22). These are the systems of social relations that determine who produces what, how they produce it, and who gets to consume it. This is an early formulation of Marx’s ethnological productionism: his view that a society’s consumption patterns, its institutions, its ideas, even its kinship practices can be explained in terms of its production pattern.³ This is the core thesis of Marx’s anthropology, even on its early formulations.

23. Marx’s economic concept of <man> entails an economic anthropology. The upshot is that, though human nature remains in some limiting sense biological, it is also shaped, at every historical juncture, by the specific economic relationships that govern our production habits, for these habits shape our natural environment. Later, in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx makes this clear, claiming that “the essence of man” is to be found only in “the ensemble of the social relations” (Marx and Engels 1975c). It follows that the study of human being falls (at least in part) to the economists.

³ Contrast this with Feuerbach’s later *ethnological consumptionism*, derived from Jacob Moleschott’s theory of nutrition. On this view, the character of a society is shaped principally by its consumption pattern. See Feuerbach (1890) and Moleschott (1858), as well as Hook (1936, pp. 267-31) and Wartofsky (1977, pp. 411-19).

24. Second, Marx claims that, just as individual human beings fail to realize the potential of their species, so the species itself, because its nature is determined by its relationship to its environment, can fail to realize its own potential. In such cases, the species fails to realize its true (i.e. biological) nature, and this state of imperfection represents a ceiling to the possible development of the individual. Marx refers to this condition as “estrangement”: “[t]o say that *man* is estranged from himself, therefore, is the same thing as saying that the *society* of this estranged man is a caricature of his *real community*, of his true species-life” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 217).

By the process identified above, particular economic arrangements produce variations on the human species nature that fall short of its full potential. It follows that human evolution consists in gradual changes to the condition of estrangement (i.e. changes in the degree to which the actually existing species approximates the ideal form of the species). Just as Hegel understands history as the “unfolding of God’s nature,” Marx understands history as the unfolding of the human nature. The sense in which Marx’s early anthropology is humanist, therefore (cf. §4.6), is that it is ultimately concerned with the capacity of individual human beings to realize their full potential.

25. Accordingly, Marx understands our biological nature as realizable in principle only under ideal economic conditions. He writes that “*human nature is the true community of men*” (217). His name for this true community is “communism,” understood as “the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being” (296). Marx says very little about what the communist economic mode will look like. The idea tends to function as a promissory note in his thinking. Marx’s early anthropology is communist, therefore, in that it treats communism as the ideal against which earlier forms of human life are measured (i.e. it defines human beings as communism-seeking animals).

26. Third, Marx claims that the human being and its development in time are wholly natural phenomena. This raises a classical (i.e. Parmenidean) metaphysical problem: if nature does not change, and humanity is a natural phenomenon, how can it be that humanity changes? Marx's proposal, still framed in the language of metaphysics, is that nature itself develops in time, giving rise, in the course of its development, to more and more complex, emergent levels of reality, with the final aim of generating a "humanised nature" (302) or "*human nature*" (335).

Thus, Marx defends a version of what might today be called "emergent naturalism"—though a highly anthropocentric version, on which human "[h]istory itself is a *real* part of *natural history*" only because natural history is the process of "nature developing into man" (304).⁴ Marx's early anthropology is naturalist, therefore, in a distinctly metaphysical sense: it grounds universal history in a speculative metaphysics that understands nature itself as an evolutionary process.

27. One upshot of this brief overview is that the so-called "Humanist Marxists" are right to judge that Marx's central first-order concern is with questions of anthropology (cf. E. Fromm 2004 [1961]; Kosík 1965; J. Lewis 1965; Schaff 1965; Mészáros 1970; Dunayevskaya 1982 [1973]). Those humanistic readers who suppose, however, that Marx's anthropology is strictly ethical in its ambitions (cf. Nasser 1975; Margolis 1992; Thompson 2013) are mistaken. Marx's aim, in formulating his ethnological productionism, is to describe, explain, and predict the events of universal history. Though Marx puts them to philosophical use on Genetico-Critical Explication,

⁴ The emergentist idea is later picked up by Engels, with unfortunate results, in his *Dialectics of Nature* (cf. Engels 1987: 311-587). Emergent naturalism, understood as an independent doctrine in metaphysics, finds full expression only in 1922, when C. Lloyd Morgan defends an anthropocentric version in his Gifford Lectures, titled *Emergent Evolution* (C.L. Morgan 1927), and Roy Wood Sellars defends a comparably non-anthropocentric version in his *Evolutionary Naturalism* (R.W. Sellars 1922). Thus, despite his anthropocentrism, Marx is also much ahead of his time.

his theories of human culture and economic activity, even on their earliest formulations, are best understood as contributions to scientific anthropology.

Marx continues to elaborate, qualify, and improve upon his ethnological productionism until the very end of his career. I will discuss a later iteration of the theory in Ch. 7.

28. However extravagant its metaphysical foundations may be, Marx's early anthropology responds to real problems in the debates of its time. It corrects Hegel's theological concept of <man> by taking on Feuerbach's commitment to a more exacting naturalism; and it corrects Feuerbach's excessively static, biological concept of <man> by developing a sketch of the economic processes responsible for shaping universal history. With the terms of the anthropological debate in view, I turn now to the actual arguments of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts*.

4.2. Marx's Explication of Political Economy

29. Marx's express purpose, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, is to articulate a "criticism of political economy" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 232). In particular, he sets out to show that the classical political economists (i.e. Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and others) accept an inadequate concept of <man>. Marx thinks this definition comes out in the political economists' understanding of the worker. Thus, he claims that "political economy knows the worker only as a working animal—as a beast reduced to the strictest bodily needs" (242), or (alternately) as "a machine for consuming and producing" (256). The question whether Smith or Ricardo are in fact committed to this definition will not here be my main concern. In this part of the chapter, I will reconstruct Marx's argument against classical political economy, showing how it conforms to the Genetico-Critical Explication method, and thus amounts to an explication of <man>.

30. Recall that, on Genetico-Critical Explication, we begin by subjecting our chosen A-framework to strict analysis, and thus arrive at a clear view of the consequences that follow upon accepting it (cf. §3.10). In the moment of strict analysis, we draw out whatever inconsistencies there are contained within the A-framework. On condition that some inconsistencies emerge, we then move by explicative inference to a new framework revised such that it differs from the A-framework only in (i) correcting its inconsistencies; and (ii) making whatever additional changes eventuate upon the correction of those inconsistencies (cf. §3.19). This is our candidate R-framework.

Unlike Rational Explication, however, Genetico-Critical Explication is not satisfied by this result alone. In order to avoid the conservatism problems Marx identifies by his Accommodation Argument (cf. §2.55), Genetico-Critical Explication accepts a further constraint on R-frameworks. In order to count as a legitimate successor to a given A-framework, a candidate R-framework must demonstrate its representational superiority by accounting for the illusory plausibility of its A-framework by genetic exculpation (cf. §3.39). Thus, Genetico-Critical Explication involves three moments: strict analysis, explicative inference, and genetic exculpation. I will show that each of these steps plays a key role in Marx's explication of the political economists' concept of <man>.

31. Marx begins his discussion by reconstructing the conceptual framework employed by the classical political economists. His aim is to give an honest account, "almost in the words of the political economists" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 241)—so that he can show their framework inadequate by its own lights. Like Feuerbach's criticism of traditional theology, Marx's criticism does not target at any one economist, but a kind of idealization, representing the common ground shared between the classical political economists, while glossing over intramural disagreements.

32. To ensure that his reconstruction is faithful, Marx cites numerous passages from the writings of the classical political economists. I will point to some passages in Adam Smith that support Marx's reconstruction. Marx focuses in particular on one principle of political economy. He claims that "[a]ccording to the political economists, the interest of the worker is never opposed to that of society" (240). Along these lines, Smith writes that

[t]he liberal reward of labour ... as it is the necessary effect, so it is the natural symptom of increasing national wealth. The scanty maintenance of the labouring poor, on the other hand, is the natural symptom that things are at a stand, and their starving condition that they are going fast backwards (A. Smith 1981: 91).

When society as a whole gets richer, so too does its working class; and when the workers themselves suffer, this is only because society as a whole is suffering. This is Smith's claim.

33. After subjecting political economy to strict analysis, Marx claims to derive an inconsistent conclusion. He writes that the proposition "that labour itself ... is harmful and pernicious—follows from the political economist's line of argument, without his being aware of it" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 240). If labor itself is harmful, then workers will suffer whether or not society as a whole suffers. If this in fact follows from the descriptive and explanatory framework presupposed by classical political economists like Smith, their whole enterprise will be rendered inconsistent.

34. How does this conclusion follow from the principles of political economy? In the course of his analysis, Marx examines the status of workers, according to political economy itself, in conditions of both decreasing and increasing national wealth. When wealth decreases, "the worker suffers most of all," because even "in those cases where worker and capitalist equally [i.e., both] suffer," the "worker suffers in his very existence," while the capitalist is generally forced only to accept a

loss in profits (237). Even when capitalists are ruined, and “sink[] into the working class,” this further exacerbates the suffering of the broader population of workers, as it eliminates jobs, and increases the number of candidates competing for what jobs remain (238; cf. A. Smith 1981: 85, 101).

Under conditions of growth, by contrast, demand for workers increases, with the number of jobs outstripping the number of candidates available to fill them. This leads to an increase in wages, but it also “gives rise to *overwork* among the workers,” and a concomitant “shortening of their life-span” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 237; cf. A. Smith 1981: 100). This does not prevent the working class from fulfilling its social function under capitalism, but it destroys individual lives.

35. Thus, Marx identifies an inconsistency in political economy: a contradiction between its explicit commitment to the claim that workers benefit whenever society as a whole benefits, and the opposed claim, to which it is unwittingly committed, that the worker in fact suffers increasing immiseration no matter the state of society. Marx makes clear that he understands this conclusion to follow by strict analysis. He claims that his analysis has “proceeded from the premises of political economy,” that he has “accepted its language and its laws,” and that his argument turns “[o]n the basis of political economy itself” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 270). Further, he diagnoses this inconsistency as owing, ultimately, to political economy’s inadequate concept of <man>.

36. Smith holds that “[n]o society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable” (A. Smith 1981: 96). He is aware, however, of the miserable conditions to which the workers of his time are subject, even during conditions of economic growth. Yet he claims that a growing economy “is in reality the chearful and the hearty

state to all the different orders of the society” (99). Marx proposes that political economy can tolerate incongruities of this sort because it defines the human being directly in terms of its specific economic function. Thus, the worker is not a many-sided being, but a worker and nothing more.

Along these lines, Marx claims that political economy counts the worker happy when he satisfies his function as a worker, completing the day’s work and generating a profit for his employer. However, it “does not consider him when he is not working, as a human being” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 241). This particular error follows from the more general error of identifying human individuals with their economic type or function. That Smith, for instance, is able to register the suffering of workers at all, however, suggests that political economy also includes some other, conflicting, more robust conception of human well-being: one that countenances the possibility of workers carrying out their economic function satisfactorily, yet remaining unhappy and unsatisfied with their lives as human being. Thus, political economy involves a confused concept of <man>.

37. Marx proposes to explicate this concept, resolving its inconsistencies by reforming some of its constitutive principles. Thus, he moves by explicative inference from political economy, understood as an A-framework, to an R-framework embodying a minimal mutilation of that starting point (cf. §1.66). The outlines of Marx’s proposed R-framework can be scented already in his initial characterization of the defectiveness of political economy’s concept of <man>: he claims that “political economy *defines* the *estranged* form of social intercourse as the *essential* and *original* form corresponding to man’s nature” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 217).

Thus, political economy defines the human being in terms of a definite nature N, where the human being having this nature is led to exhibit some definite set of behavioral and institutional patterns (i.e. the capitalist economic mode). Drawing upon the theory of species estrangement,

introduced in the first part of this chapter, Marx identifies N as an estranged human nature. Thus, he rejects political economy's principle according to which human nature is N, replacing it by the following pair of principles: (i) human nature is some N' (i.e. communism); and (ii) N is not human nature, but an estranged approximation to N'. This revision will, of course, issue in numerous downstream conceptual changes, given Marx's commitment to conceptual holism (cf. §3.14)—but Marx takes it to be a minimal mutilation of political economy, and one that follows by necessity.

38. Under communism, presumably, our day-to-day economic activity will not undermine our capacity to flourish as human beings. It follows that, under communism, it will no longer be a mistake to identify the fulfillment of the individual, as a human being, with that individual's satisfaction of their economic function. This identification embodies a mistake only because the patterns of economic activity realized under the capitalist economic mode embody an estranged expression of human nature. It follows that right functioning, under capitalism, is not necessarily conducive to human happiness. Right functioning under communism, by contrast, is so conducive.

39. How, though, does Marx arrive at the conclusion that N is an estranged nature? He claims that “[p]olitical economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labour [under the capitalist economic mode] by not considering the *direct* relationship between the *worker* (labour) and production” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 273). Accordingly, Marx claims to reveal the estrangement of N by scrutinizing this direction relationship. More exactly, he claims to discover four ways in which wage labor, under capitalism, leads just by itself to species estrangement.

40. First, because the goods produced by workers are appropriated and sold by capitalists, workers are estranged from the products of their labor in the sense that they are not able to recognize themselves in and take pride in those goods (cf. 272-73). Second, because workers are forced to work for capitalists in order to meet their basic needs, they are estranged from the work itself: they experience work as a frustration of their will, rather than as an expression of their need to be productive (cf. 274-75). Third, though wage labor contributes to maintaining the human species as a whole, workers work only in order to make ends meet, and are thus estranged from the role they play in sustaining and enhancing the lives of others (cf. 275-77). Fourth, wage laborers and capitalists compete with one another (i.e. in labor disputes), and with members of their own classes (i.e. in market competition), and are thereby estranged from one another (cf. 277-78).

These different senses of “estrangement” share only a loose family resemblance (cf. Wood 2004: 3-6). What Marx takes them all to have in common is that they pick out ways in which the capitalist economic mode prevents human beings from fully realizing their biological nature.

41. Thus, Marx explicates political economy, arriving at his own candidate R-framework, and at a revised concept of <man>. To defend the status of his R-framework as a legitimate successor to political economy, Marx must demonstrate that it improves upon the representational adequacy of the latter. This means, first, that it must explain all the phenomena that political economy explains. Marx claims that it can. He makes this clear in his first sketch of the structure of his proposed R-framework. He claims that “though private property appears to be the reason, the cause of alienated labour, it is rather its consequence” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 279).

Marx means by this that, on his early R-framework, we will not explain the current, estranged configuration of human nature in terms of the present state of the economy. Instead, we

will explain the present economic mode as the sort of system that arises for beings like us (i.e. estranged human beings). This is an instance of Marx's anthropocentric explanatory strategy.⁵ With this in mind, he promises (implausibly) to explain all of economics in terms of <man> (cf. 281). Setting Marx's anthropocentrism and dubious reductive strategy aside, it is clear that he takes his proposed R-framework to match political economy's descriptive and explanatory power: if it can derive all of political economy from <man>, it can reproduce all of that framework's successes.

42. Marx also believes, however, that his R-framework can provide at least one explanation that political economy cannot: it can explain how political economy takes on its false plausibility. Thus, Marx argues, from the perspective of his R-framework, that the world in which the classical political economists live is itself shaped by an estranged form of the human species. When the political economists look for evidence to confirm or disconfirm their theories, what they encounter is a social reality already shaped by species estrangement. This leads them to define "the *estranged* form of social intercourse as the *essential* and *original* form corresponding to man's nature" (217).

Entrenched defenders of political economy mistake a single phase in the economic evolution of the humanity (i.e. a single phase of universal history) for the permanent or unchanging nature of the human species. Marx, however, takes himself to give account of the processes that generate this false appearance. Thus, he claims that "[f]ar from refuting it, the ruptured *world of industry* confirms [political economy's] *self-ruptured principle*" (292). This explanation exculpates the classical political economists: it treats them as good-faith inquirers whose best efforts at arriving at the truth are waylaid by misleading appearances (cf. §3.39); but it also demonstrates the representational superiority of Marx's R-framework over political economy.

⁵ As Philip Kain points out, this order of explanation is reversed in Marx's later works, and represents one of the major shifts in Marx's anthropological thinking between his early and mature theories. See Kain (1986, p. 17).

43. Allow me to review. Marx subjects political economy to strict analysis, deriving an inconsistency. He then resolves that inconsistency by explicative inference, replacing political economy's concept of <man> by his own successor concept. Marx's argument amounts to the charge that the classical political economists defend an inadequate anthropology. Marx then provides a genetic exculpation of political economy: he explains away the apparent plausibility of political economy, and its defective concept of <man>, from the perspective of his R-framework. In particular, he exculpates the classical political economists by explaining their mistake away in terms of "an *actual* economic fact" (271). Thus, Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* criticism of political economy conforms closely to Genetico-Critical Explication, in each of its three moments.

4.3. First Hidden Premise: Feuerbach's Explication of Hegel

44. One problem remains. In his explication of political economy, Marx draws upon conceptual resources neither (i) already contained in political economy; nor (ii) plausibly generated through the minimal mutilation of political economy by explicative inference. That is, he draws upon his entire theory of species estrangement, and of the human essence. This is one of the main sources of confusion regarding the structure of Marx's argument. How can he claim to derive his conclusions directly, by explicative inference, from political economy, when his proposed R-framework includes a totally extrinsic theory of human nature? A number of unfamiliar concepts figure in Marx's argument: <essence>, <species being>, <life activity>, and so on.

Marx's explicit remarks in the *1844 Manuscripts* provide little guidance. In what remains of this chapter, I will investigate how Marx entitles himself to these concepts, without which his explication of political economy's concept of <man> fails to go through.

45. I propose, in particular, to read Marx's early explication of <man> as presupposing two auxiliary explications, each of which functions as a hidden premise in Marx's explicit line of argument against political economy. The first of these auxiliary explications is an argument against Hegel, which Marx takes over directly from Feuerbach. The second is an argument against Feuerbach himself. Neither argument appears explicitly in the text of the *1844 Manuscripts*, but there are good reasons to believe that Marx accepts both. Attributing these hidden premises to Marx, thus treating his overarching explication of <man> as a kind of enthymeme, resolves the question of the provenance and legitimacy of the extra concepts he relies upon in his explication of <man>—though, as I will mention at the end of the chapter, one further bit of trouble remains. For now, I turn to the arguments Marx presupposes.

46. Marx makes clear, in the *Manuscripts*, that he thinks a “critical discussion of *Hegelian dialectic* and philosophy as a whole” will be necessary to ensure that he avoids taking on too many “philosophical presuppositions” (232). In the section he devotes to this criticism, however, Marx does not develop a new criticism of Hegel, but restricts himself to shoring up Feuerbach's previous criticisms (e.g. by showing that they apply not just to Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which is the text Feuerbach targets explicitly for criticism, but also to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*).

Through this, Marx signals his reliance on the results of Feuerbach's previous arguments against Hegel. Thus, he derives his concepts of <essence>, <species being>, and <life activity> from Feuerbach, while Feuerbach derives these concepts, modified through explication, from Hegel. As I will argue in the next part of the chapter, the situation is not quite so simple: Marx

subjects Feuerbach's concepts to explication in turn. Even if this were not the case, however, his presupposition of Feuerbach's concepts is not as philosophically suspect as it at first seems.

47. First, Marx adopts his early method for philosophy from Feuerbach, with only minor changes (cf. §§3.37-38). It follows that there is significant continuity of method between Feuerbach's explication of Hegel, and Marx's subsequent explication of political economy. Second, most of Marx's intended readers for the *1844 Manuscripts* will have been familiar with Feuerbach's writings. The arguments that Marx takes over from Feuerbach will have been ready to mind for those best prepared to evaluate the special use he makes of them.

48. I move now to Feuerbach's argument. Having subjected Hegel's philosophy to strict analysis during his years as an acolyte, Feuerbach claims to derive an inconsistency. He claims that Hegel's philosophy is motivated by two, inconsistent principles: a non-naturalistic principle, which drives Hegel to treat only the most spiritual, the least corporeal phenomena as truly real; and a naturalistic principle, which drives Hegel to treat only those phenomena that play some role in the concrete reality of human life as real. This is the claim, raised later by Lenin, that Hegel already contains the necessary materials for a consistent naturalism, which has only "to be discovered, understood, [rescued], laid bare, refined, which is precisely what Marx and Engels [do]" (Lenin 1976: 141).⁶

In his "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," Feuerbach puts the point somewhat obscurely, accusing Hegel of "*identifying the negation of Christianity with Christianity itself*"

⁶ C.L.R. James offers less qualifications on this point, claiming that "Hegel put his philosophy on a very firm materialist basis" (James 1981: 56), and that "when he is dealing with scientific method or the science of thought, he is the most rigid of materialists" (57). There is even a recent trend toward mislabeling Hegel as a "materialist" without qualification (cf. Ruda 2011; Žižek 2012; Johnston 2018). Contributors to this recent trend are unlikely to acknowledge any inconsistency in Hegel on this point. For a salient response to the claim that Marx's materialism is present already in Hegel, which holds up against newer variations on the theme, see Colletti (1973).

(Feuerbach 2012d: 206). His meaning, however, is just that Hegel's efforts to move beyond the theological worldview are constantly frustrated by his retention of theological commitments, while his apologetic efforts in theology are likewise frustrated by his acceptance of naturalistic precepts.

49. Just as Marx diagnoses the inconsistencies in political economy as stemming from its defective concept of <man>, Feuerbach diagnoses the inconsistencies in Hegel as stemming from the latter's concept of <being> (i.e. his concept of the immediate object of awareness). In his *Science of Logic*, Hegel defines <being> as "free of determinateness with respect to essence" (Hegel 2010: 58). It is a sheer something, of which nothing in particular can be predicated. Hegel himself takes <being>, thus defined, to be unintelligible, and argues that, in order to make sense of <being>, we have to presuppose a whole system of higher concepts, including <determinate being>, <quantity>, <essence>, and especially <the absolute> (i.e. God). In the *Logic*, he sets out to prove this.

Hegel's idea is roughly that we can only make sense of what it means for something to simply be once we have access to various higher-order concepts, such as allow us to recognize kinds, for instance, or relations. Hegel contends that reflection on these concepts will reveal them to presuppose yet others, and ultimately to presuppose an idea of everything hanging together as a whole. This latter idea is <the absolute>, which Hegel identifies with the Christian God (cf. 285).

50. Hegel also claims, however, that <being> is not just a "temporary assumption" (50), to be discarded once it has been shown to presuppose all these other, higher-order concepts. Instead, <being> is the "foundation of all subsequent developments" in science, such that "science fully developed, is the completed cognition of it" (49). Reconstructed as a process of explication, Hegel's *Logic* explicates <being>, ultimately, in terms of <the absolute>. This means that it

dissolves <being> into the <absolute> (cf. §2.38): it identifies a sturdy dissolution base for <being>, providing grounds for retaining everything in <being> that can find purchase in that base.

51. Feuerbach takes this concept of <being> to embody both of Hegel's inconsistent principles. On the naturalistic side, Hegel treats science as the study of <being> because he wants his *Science of Logic* to be naturalistically respectable. Thus, Feuerbach writes that Hegel's "demand that the Idea realize itself, that it assume sensuousness arises from the fact that sensuous reality is *unconsciously held to be the truth which is both prior to and independent of thought*" (Feuerbach 2012d: 223). The non-naturalistic principle is revealed in the course of Hegel's explication of <being> in terms of <the absolute>: it is only because the concept is inadequate, in just the way that it is, that Hegel is able to argue to the conclusion that being presupposes God. Thus, Feuerbach claims that, as soon as Hegel accepts his inadequate concept of <being>, his non-naturalistic conclusion to the effect that <being> presupposes <the absolute> or <God> is already decided.

52. Feuerbach proposes to resolve the inconsistencies in Hegel's A-framework by replacing his concept of <being>. In particular, he concludes that "[t]he only way out of this contradiction is to regard sensuous reality as *its own subject*; to give it an absolutely independent, divine, and primary significance, not one derived from the Idea [i.e., from <the absolute>]" (Feuerbach 2012d: 224). In this sense, Feuerbach's approach mirrors the approach taken by Schelling (cf. §2.9).

For his own part, Feuerbach moves by explicative inference to a concept of <being> that does not derive its determinate form or content from higher-order categories, but contains that form from the start. He writes in *The Essence of Christianity* that "[a]ll real existence, *i.e.*, all existence which is truly such, is qualitative, determinative existence" (Feuerbach 1989: 15). The

idea is that being does not depend on thought, or on God, to attain a positive content; rather, the world, and sense data, already contain the positive content that we apprehend, in turn, in thought.

53. Feuerbach's claim is this: every entity that counts as real belongs to some kind, such that we can say generically of it that things of its kind have such-and-such powers and attributes. The kind to which a thing belongs is its essence, and the essence of a thing sets standards for its goodness and badness: a good plant is a plant that successfully realizes the powers and attributes generically attributable to all plants. Thus, Feuerbach's proposed R-framework introduces a robust concept of <being>, replete with the concept <kind>, the concept <function>, and the concept <norm>.

In defending his candidate R-framework, Feuerbach hews to his usual strategy of short-circuiting idealist arguments against naturalism by postulating a normatively robust nature (cf. Feuerbach 2012e: 93-94). This transition also amounts just to the identification of Hegel's concept of <being> with his concept of <determinate being>. In this sense, Feuerbach's R-framework is already contained in Hegel's A-framework. Both concepts, however, are modified through explication. Thus, Feuerbach retains Hegel's A-framework, and much of his philosophical system along with it, though in an often unrecognizably modified form.

54. Through strict analysis, therefore, Feuerbach identifies an inconsistency in Hegel's concept of <being>. He then moves by explicative inference to a corrected concept of the same. He drops Hegel's non-naturalistic principle in order to retain his naturalistic principle. Because Feuerbach, like both Hegel and Marx, is a conceptual holist (cf. §1.58), the reforms he makes to one quarter

of Hegel's A-framework have wide-ranging implications for other quarters.⁷ Thus, Feuerbach recognizes Hegel's defective concept of <being> as having implications even for anthropology. He claims that Hegel defines <man> as "an abstract, ... merely thinking being to which the body does not belong" (227). Feuerbach, by contrast, defines <man> as a "real and sensuous *being*" (227). His proposed R-framework includes a number of key anthropological concepts that Marx, in turn, presupposes in the course of his explication of the political economists' concept of <man>.

55. On Feuerbach's candidate R-framework, human beings, as beings, belong to a kind, and thus possess generic powers and attributes characteristic of that kind. In particular, Feuerbach writes that "[t]o a complete man belong the power of thought, the power of will, [and] the power of affection," adding that these "are not powers which man possesses [accidentally], for he is nothing without them, he is what he is only by them" (Feuerbach 1989: 3). These powers constitute the essence or nature of the human being. This is the core of Feuerbach's successor concept of <man>.

56. The power of affection, which Feuerbach refers to also as the power of "love" or "need," is the human being's capacity to apprehend and be affected by sensible things outside of the body. Feuerbach argues that the power of affection is possible only (i) in case there is at least one existing thing outside of me, capable of acting upon me in its own right; and (ii) in case things exist in space and time. Thus, he insists that "[s]pace and time are not mere forms of appearance: They are *essential conditions, rational forms, and laws of being as well as of thought*" (Feuerbach 2012d: 233). Marx incorporates a version of this claim into his own R-framework, claiming that

⁷ It is a mistake, therefore, to too hastily identify either Feuerbach or Marx's concepts as "Hegelian." See for instance Levine (2009) and Rockmore (2002, Ch. 1). Marx and Feuerbach derive their concepts from Hegel. The concepts are modified by explication, however, often with ramifying consequences for their entailment relations.

“[m]an as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a *suffering* being” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 337). That is, human beings depend on a world of concrete things beyond the limits of their bodies.

57. Feuerbach also attributes to the human being the power of will, which he sometimes refers to as “free activity.” Among forms of free activity, Feuerbach claims that “the happiest, the most blissful activity is that which is productive” (Feuerbach 1989: 217). Through productive activity, the human being produces an external expression of its nature, and especially of its personality (i.e. those features of its character that set it apart from other instances of the same kind). The will takes shape in artistic creation, useful labor, and biological reproduction. Marx reproduces a version of this claim: he writes that, for the human being, “production is his active species-life,” and that, through his productive activity, “he duplicates himself not only ... intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and ... sees himself in a world that he has created” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 277).

58. Finally, Feuerbach identifies the power of thought with “consciousness” or “intellect.” He takes human consciousness to be distinguished from animal consciousness by the human capacity to reflect on *genera* or *abstracta* (i.e. kinds). The most important kind is the kind to which the conscious individual belongs. Thus, Feuerbach writes that “[c]onsciousness in the strictest sense is present only in a being to whom his species, his essential nature, is an object of thought,” adding that only “[w]here there is higher consciousness [is] ... there a capability of science” (Feuerbach 1989: 1). Again, Marx incorporates a version of this claim into his own proposed framework, claiming that “[i]n his *consciousness of species* man confirms his real *social life* and simply repeats

his real existence in thought” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 299). The human being is a “*species-being*, and has to confirm and manifest himself as such both in his being and in his knowing” (337).

59. Thus, Marx derives many of the concepts that he relies upon for his explication of political economy from Feuerbach’s independent explication of Hegel’s concept of <being>. He does not make this debt explicit in its details, but he does acknowledge, explicitly, that “positive criticism as a whole,” and thus also his “positive criticism of political economy ... owes its true foundation to the discoveries of *Feuerbach*” (232). I have shown that Feuerbach’s explication of Hegel conforms quite neatly to Genetico-Critical Explication: Feuerbach identifies an inconsistency by strict analysis, and moves to a more adequate R-framework by explicative inference. I will leave off any discussion of the genetic exculpation of Hegel’s A-framework until later in this chapter.

If we suppose that Marx simply takes Feuerbach’s concepts onboard without argument (i.e. dogmatically), then we must abandon our conception of the early Marx as a critical philosopher. By using Genetico-Critical Explication as a guide, however, we can reconstruct Feuerbach’s criticism of Hegel as an explication, and understand Marx as incorporating this auxiliary explication into his own explication of political economy as a kind of hidden premise, treating Feuerbach’s argument as a component part of his own. This allows an interpretation of the structure of the *1844 Manuscripts* argument that is plausible, and does not fall afoul of the critical program.

4.4. Second Hidden Premise: Marx’s Explication of Feuerbach

60. Another problem remains, however. Though they resemble them quite closely, Marx’s concepts of <essence>, <life activity>, and <species being> in the *1844 Manuscripts* are not exactly Feuerbach’s. Marx’s concepts all incorporate his theory of species estrangement.

Thus, Marx writes that the “examination of the *division of labour* and *exchange* is of extreme interest, because these are *perceptibly alienated* expressions of human *activity* and *essential power* as a *species* activity and species power” (321). Feuerbach explains numerous phenomena—especially in the domain of religion—in terms of the individual’s failure to realize the perfections of the species; but he lacks the conceptual resources to make sense of what it would be for the species itself to be imperfect. Thus, the problem announced above remains: Marx appears to come by his concepts extrajudicially, so to speak, violating his own requirement that we arrive at more adequate theories just by explicating their less adequate predecessors.

61. From a historical standpoint, this issue is fairly clear. I have already introduced the idea that there are several points of conflict between Marx and Feuerbach in anthropology (cf. §4.20), even in the *1844 Manuscripts*. In 1844, however, Marx is not yet ready to admit this fact. He sees the manuscripts as extending Feuerbach’s research program into the domain of political economy.

As late as August 1844, Marx writes to Feuerbach framing latent disagreements between the two as agreements in principle (cf. 354).⁸ After abandoning the *Manuscripts*, Marx admits the full scope of his disagreement with Feuerbach—though, notably, never in print. He makes these disagreements explicit in his early “Theses on Feuerbach,” and in *The German Ideology*, both themselves unpublished. I will draw upon these criticisms in reconstructing Marx’s earlier thought.

62. Most of the conclusions of these later criticisms, however, are telegraphed already by the silent revisions Marx makes to Feuerbach’s concepts in the course of the *Manuscripts*. The trouble is

⁸ However, see two earlier letters to Arnold Ruge, in which Marx mentions an (unspecified) disagreement with Feuerbach concerning religion, and a further disagreement concerning the relative emphasis to be placed on nature or politics. See Marx (1975, pp. 386, 400). Marx later characterizes his loyalty to Feuerbach as membership in a “Feuerbach cult” (Marx and Engels 1987: 360), which explains his reticence to enter into explicit disagreement.

that Marx fails to provide any explicit argument for these changes, or even register their existence. It is important to admit, therefore, that this is a point at which the *Manuscripts* are substantially and irreducibly unfinished—a point at which the explicit argumentation of the *Manuscripts* breaks down. I concede this much to Musto (cf. §4.1). I will argue, however, that it is possible, using the Genetico-Critical Explication method as a guide, and drawing upon Marx’s later criticisms, to reconstruct a plausible Marxian explication of Feuerbach that neatly fills the gap in his argument.

63. Marx first introduces the line of argument I propose to reconstruct in the “Theses on Feuerbach” (cf. Marx and Engels 1975c: 5). He makes the point clear for the first time, however, in *The German Ideology*, where he writes that “[a]s far as Feuerbach is a materialist he does not deal with history, and as far as he considers history he is not a materialist” (41). Thus, Marx claims that, by subjecting Feuerbach’s A-framework to strict analysis, we can derive an inconsistency.

Feuerbach claims, on one hand, that “nature is ... the ground of man,” and that the human species nature is unchanging (Feuerbach 2012c: 169). When discussing universal history, however, he seems to allow for some change. He claims, for instance, that “[t]he history of mankind consists of nothing else than a continuous and progressive conquest of limits” (Feuerbach 1989: 153), and celebrates the “emerging of man from a state of savagery and wildness to one of culture” (20) in the course of universal history. He does not show, however, how an invariant nature can ground temporally variable expressions of that nature. Thus, much in the pattern of Hegel, Feuerbach is forced to attribute historical developments to an independent (i.e. non-natural) process of spiritual development—a move that sits uncomfortably with his professed naturalism.

64. Having identified this inconsistency in Feuerbach through strict analysis, our reconstructed Marx moves to correct it through explication (i.e. through explicative inference). He diagnoses the inconsistency as stemming from Feuerbach's defective concept of <species nature>. In particular, Feuerbach supposes that all human beings, across historical epochs, possess the same nature.

Marx moves, by explicative inference, to a candidate R-framework on which as much as possible is retained from Feuerbach's A-framework (including, e.g., his distinction between three essential human powers, discussed above), but his concept of <species nature> is modified. In particular, Marx divides Feuerbach's concept of <species nature> in two, distinguishing between <estranged nature> and <true nature>. To do this, he relies on the concept of <estrangement>. The concept of <estrangement> has origins in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (cf. Hegel 1977b: §§36, 340, 486; as well as Rae 2012), but also appears, in modified form, in Feuerbach (Feuerbach 2012c: 157; 2012d: 205, 209; 1989: 212, 248). Thus, Marx explicates Feuerbach's concept of <species nature> by modifying its relation to another of Feuerbach's concepts, <estrangement>. Given Marx's holism, this change has far-reaching consequences for the R-framework that results.

65. I will not attempt to explain exactly how this core modification to the concept of <species nature> entails each of the changes Marx makes to Feuerbach's A-framework. This would require showing, for instance, why allowing for the possibility of an estranged species nature requires understanding human nature in particular as realized in the "ensemble of the social relations" rather than in an "abstraction inherent in each single individual" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 4). My point has been to show that Marx's later reflections allow us to understand his silent revisions to Feuerbach's concepts as conforming to the general pattern of Genetico-Critical Explication.

Whether Marx's argument succeeds is another question, and one I do not propose to settle. We are left to speculate why Marx himself never works the argument out in finer detail.

66. Supposing that our Marx can make good on his argument, the resulting R-framework will, in principle, resolve the inconsistencies of Feuerbach's A-framework. It will allow that our nature develops in time: at any given historical juncture, the human species as a whole realizes some more or less estranged nature. On this definition of <species nature>, we can explain cultural phenomena directly in terms of our nature, while also recognizing that cultural phenomena change in the course of time. Thus, Marx writes that "[t]he nature which develops in human history—the genesis of human society—is man's *real* nature; hence nature as it develops through industry, even though in an *estranged* form, is true *anthropological* nature" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 303).

On our reconstruction, Marx derives these concepts from Feuerbach, who derives them in turn from Hegel. He then employs this argument as a hidden premise in his explication of political economy. The concept of <estrangement> is especially integral to his genetic exculpation of political economy, by which he argues that the classical political economists mistake an estranged form of the human species—one stage in the course of its evolution—for its unchanging nature.

67. Incidentally, the 1844 Marx also provides a genetic exculpation of Hegel's A-framework (i.e. the framework explicated by Feuerbach in the previous part of the chapter). I mention this only now because the explanation presupposes the results not just of Feuerbach's explication of Hegel, but also of Marx's own explications of both Feuerbach and political economy. That Marx goes out of his way to provide a genetic exculpation of Hegel is further evidence that he considers

Feuerbach's explication of Hegel to be a genuine part of his own broader argument in the *1844 Manuscripts*.

68. How does Marx explain Hegel's framework away? He writes, from the perspective of his proposed R-framework, and with Hegel in mind, that "[t]he *philosopher*—who is himself an abstract form of estranged man—takes himself as the *criterion* of the estranged world" (331).

Marx argues that Hegel correctly "grasps *labour* [or productive activity] as the *essence* of man," but, as an academic philosopher, "[t]he only labour which Hegel knows and recognises is *abstractly* mental labour" (333). Hegel lives under an estranged configuration of human social relations. That system of relations allows that he should spend all day thinking, calling that work, while others toil at mindless labor in factories and fields. This has a distorting influence on Hegel's understanding of the world. In particular, it produces for him the objectively misleading appearance that thinking is all that human productive activity ever amounts to. Thus, Hegel is led to define <man>, whose essential power is productive activity, directly in terms of thinking (i.e. in terms of the abstract form of productive activity with which he, a philosopher, is most familiar).

69. By providing this explanation, Marx exculpates Hegel: he treats him as a rational inquirer whose efforts to understand the nature of the human species are waylaid by misleading appearances beyond his control. Likewise, he exculpates those who today accept Hegel's framework: almost everyone who accepts Hegel's framework is a philosopher, and philosophers are rational people, though rational people whose situation presents them with an inordinate quantity of bad evidence. On the other hand, just as he makes no explicit reference to the details of his explication of Feuerbach, Marx makes no explicit attempt, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, to provide a genetic

exculpation of Feuerbach's A-framework. He does provide a genetic exculpation of Feuerbach's errors, however, in later writings. I will return to this exculpation in Ch. 7.

70. Before concluding this chapter, I will pause over one possible source, in Genetico-Critical Explication itself, for the difficulty or obscurity of the *1844 Manuscripts*. Because Genetico-Critical Explication retains from Rational Explication its explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, it requires that each candidate R-framework be derived from one particular A-framework. Thus, to the extent that the *Manuscripts* embody a coherent framework or theory, that theory must be understood as an explication of and response to political economy.

Marx's proposed R-framework is not, strictly speaking, a response to Hegel, nor to Feuerbach, and it cannot be, per the strictures of his method, if it hopes to leverage a "criticism of political economy" (232). This constraint runs up against Marx's free-ranging instincts in philosophy. Synoptic thinker that he is, he prefers to draw upon many influences at once. Genetico-Critical Explication makes this difficult, and the tortured argument structure of the *1844 Manuscripts* can be seen to reflect Marx's struggles against the limitations of his own method.

71. In order to make sense of how his candidate R-framework can follow both from his explication of political economy, and from (say) Feuerbach's explication of Hegel, Marx notes that both Hegel's A-framework and political economy make the mistake of identifying an estranged or alienated form of humanity as the true form of the species. He then introduces the following hypothesis: though they differ in mode of presentation, these two A-frameworks are identical in their deeper structure (i.e. they are notational variants of a single framework).

Thus, Marx writes that “Hegel’s standpoint is that of modern political economy” (333). If we suppose this to be true, the problem of multiple influences disappears. Marx can present his R-framework as an explication of any A-framework, so long as it exhibits the same structure as political economy. If Marx is right that Hegel’s A-framework exhibits this structure, then the two hidden premises I have reconstructed here belong directly to the explication of political economy. In principle, then, this resolves the problem of the provenance and legitimacy of the conceptual resources Marx takes for granted in the course of his explication of political economy.

72. To review: despite its complexity, the argument of the *1844 Manuscripts* hews closely to the pattern of Genetico-Critical Explication. Marx identifies an inconsistency in political economy by strict analysis, then resolves it by moving to a new framework by explicative inference. To demonstrate the representational superiority of his new framework, he explains political economy away as a partially informed response to misleading appearances. Marx’s argument ultimately relies on conceptual resources not derived from political economy itself. I have shown that we can reconstruct two plausible hidden premises that support Marx’s main line of argument. These arguments, too, conform to Genetico-Critical Explication.

Chapter 5 – Necessity, Accommodation, and the Myth of the Given

1. I have already claimed that Marx comes, in time, to reject Genetico-Critical Explication (cf. §3.23). In particular, he comes to reject the explicative inference procedure of discovery that Genetico-Critical Explication retains from Rational Explication. By the time of *The German Ideology*, which Marx authors in 1845 with the help of Friedrich Engels, this is clear.

Marx writes that, for those committed to explicative inference, “it is altogether simply a matter of resolving the ready-made nonsense they find into some other freak, i.e., of presupposing that all this nonsense has a special *sense* which can be discovered,” whereas “really [i.e., on the correct procedure] it is only a question of explaining these theoretical phrases from the actual existing relations” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 56). Thus, Marx proposes to retain from Genetico-Critical Explication its genetic-exculpation-based procedure of justification, but to reject its explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery. In this way, he comes to treat explicative inference as just another article of defective “theoretical equipment inherited from Hegel” (236).

2. In this chapter, I propose to reconstruct Marx’s reasons for rejecting explicative inference at the time of *The German Ideology*. In the first part of the chapter, I will examine the type of argument Marx seems to employ. In particular, Marx does not develop another *a priori*, knockdown argument, in the mold of his earlier Accommodation Argument (cf. §2.55). I will argue, however, that Marx does provide us with the resources to understand his reasoning in rejecting explicative inference. Because his new argument is a naturalistic one, however, akin to the sort of argument an empirical scientist might use in selecting between hypotheses, it can be easy to overlook.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx argues that certain images, or analogical models, are ultimately unfruitful as heuristics (i.e. when it comes to shaping or inspiring our first-order

theories). I will examine two examples. I will also argue that Marx inherits his penchant for criticizing analogical models from Feuerbach, and thus guard against the charge of anachronism.

3. In the second part of the chapter, I will reconstruct Marx's argument against the fruitfulness of "the philosopher's stone," the particular analogical model that figures in his rejection of explicative inference. This argument arises in the course of Marx's criticism of Max Stirner, a follower of Bruno Bauer who employs a method like Rational Explication. I will argue that the philosopher's stone model is best understood as a 19th-century counterpart to what Wilfrid Sellars calls "the myth of the given" (W. Sellars 1991: §26), or what Karl Popper calls "instruction from without" (Popper 1994: 8). I will also argue that, in the course of his argument against the philosopher's stone, Marx rules out as misguided a whole class of frameworks—namely, those that depend upon this model.

4. In the third and fourth parts of the chapter, I will show how Marx's rejection of the philosopher's stone bears on particular methods in philosophy. This requires showing that not just our theories or frameworks, but also our methods or procedures can depend on particular analogical models.

I will turn first to a candidate procedure that I have not yet discussed: the procedure of discovery I call "empirical calibration." In this part of the chapter, I will attempt to resolve the question, first introduced in Ch. 3 (cf. §3.55), why Marx fails to adopt an empiricist procedure of discovery. Given that Genetico-Critical Explication is motivated to correct against Rational Explication's unresponsiveness to considerations of empirical adequacy, it seems natural that it should adopt a procedure of discovery that selects concepts directly for their empirical adequacy.

5. I will argue, however, that though Marx never gives any explicit argument for his rejection of such procedures (either in his early or in his mature writings), his rejection of the philosopher's

stone precludes his endorsing them. More exactly, I will argue that, understood correctly, to select for concepts directly in terms of empirical adequacy, the empirical calibration procedure of discovery must presuppose the truth of concept empiricism (i.e. the idea that some concepts are direct copies of empirical data). I will then argue that this theory—concept empiricism—is ruled out as misguided by Marx’s argument, for the reason that it depends on the philosopher’s stone.

6. In the final part of the chapter, I will argue that similar considerations hold for the explicative inference procedure of discovery. In particular, I will argue that Marx’s criticism of unfruitful models puts him in position to recognize that explicative inference depends upon the philosopher’s stone, and is for this reason misguided. Marx never makes this claim himself, so my reconstruction amounts to a thesis about what Marx is in position to know, not about his explicit commitments.

I will show that explicative inference’s dependence on the model of the philosopher’s stone involves its character as necessary inference. I will argue that every procedure of discovery that takes itself to arrive at new concepts by necessity will fall prey to the philosopher’s stone. This explains Marx’s rejection of all such procedures in the course of articulating his mature method.

7. This result supports the conclusion I arrived at in Ch. 2, after my maximally generalized formulation of Marx’s Accommodation Argument (cf. §2.72): that it is the necessity of explicative inference, in particular, that is responsible for its in-principle tendency to produce conservative outcomes. Marx’s retention of explicative inference on Genetico-Critical Explication is a misstep explainable in terms of his failure to further generalize the Accommodation Argument. His reflections on analogical models, and on the philosopher’s stone in particular, serve to correct this

error: he comes to see that Genetico-Critical Explication fails to split the horns of the dilemma raised by the Accommodation Argument because it fails to target the true source of the problem.

5.1. Myths and Models

8. I argue, in this dissertation, that Marx's method in philosophy undergoes definite and well-reasoned changes over the course of his career. I deny, therefore, that Marx's method and philosophical outlook are consistent throughout his career. Readers of Marx who agree with me on this have often recognized a major shift in Marx's method around 1845. Thus, Althusser claims that, by the time of *The German Ideology*, Marx understands that "the Feuerbachian critique of Hegel [is] a critique 'from within Hegelian philosophy itself,'" and effects a total "abandonment of the philosophical problematic whose recalcitrant prisoner Feuerbach remain[s]" (Althusser 1969a: 8). This means, too, that Marx comes to reject his own Feuerbach-inspired early method.

9. Readers who maintain that there is a shift in Marx's method have often struggled to identify arguments, in Marx's writings, for dropping the early method. They have accordingly resorted just to describing his earlier and later methods, as though cataloguing differences amounts to arguing in favor of one over the other. Even Philip Kain, one of the most judicious writers about developments in Marx's thinking, resorts to the catalogue approach (cf. Kain 1986: Ch. 2). Althusser describes Marx's shift in method as an "epistemological break": a sudden, rationally inexplicable overcoming of unconsciously held prejudices (cf. Althusser 1969b: 132). This does nothing, however, to establish that the changes in Marx's method are well-reasoned. Instead, it provides ammunition to those who would maintain that no such changes ever come to pass.

10. It is no accident that philosophers have made so little progress in reconstructing Marx's arguments against his own early method. There are three overlapping explanations for this. First, like the *1844 Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology* is an unfinished manuscript, and its argumentative structure is not always clear. The greater part of the manuscript is devoted to strict analysis of a sort, picking away at fine details of rival frameworks. Moreover, the central line of Marx's argument is obscured by regular digressions into polemic. In the next chapter, I will argue that, unlike in the *1844 Manuscripts*, these features of *The German Ideology* are by design. Nevertheless, they make it difficult for casual readers of the manuscript to make out its argument.

11. Second, even among philosophers, Marx is singularly allergic to explicit self-criticism. He almost nowhere admits that his own approach to philosophy is, or ever has been, less than adequate. His silence on this topic functions as a further piece of misleading evidence in favor of the claim that he retains roughly the same method throughout his career. To put the point directly, past efforts to locate Marx's arguments against his own earlier method have met little success because Marx in fact never explicitly lays his argument out in these self-directed terms.

In reconstructing Marx's attitude toward his early method, we are forced to rely upon more indirect admissions. As the historian Jonathan Sperber points out, when Marx does engage in self-criticism—which he must do, after all, given his commitment to the critical program in philosophy—he disguises it as criticism of others: “Marx [takes] his own previous ideas and project[s] them onto other thinkers, where he [can] then reject them without having to criticize himself” (Sperber 2013: 172). This is a bit of smoke and mirrors that would be more frustrating than helpful were it not the “only form of self-criticism that [Marx's] personality will allow” (172). Identifying Marx's attitude toward Genetico-Critical Explication, therefore, requires that we attend

to his criticisms of other philosophers, and in particular to his criticism of the component procedures of his early method (especially explicative inference) in those philosophers' writings.

12. Third, by the time he comes to raise objections against Genetico-Critical Explication, Marx has already adopted the mature method that will replace it. I will discuss this method in the next chapter. I have already noted, however, that it does not retain explicative inference as its procedure of discovery, and therefore no longer derives candidate R-frameworks from their predecessor by distinctively *a priori* chains of inference. Thus, along with explicative inference, Marx rejects the whole “learned pastime (for it is nothing more) of ... theoretical bubble-blowing” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 56). That is, Marx abandons the effort to formulate broad, abstract, principles-based arguments that rule out, *a priori*, and with unerring certainty, entire families of frameworks.

13. In abandoning this style of argument, Marx claims to “leave philosophy aside” (236). I will argue in the next chapter that this is something of an overstatement. Marx does not abandon philosophy outright; he simply abandons the traditional, anti-naturalistic approach to philosophical argumentation characteristic of (for instance) Hegel and Feuerbach. One result of this shift, however, is that Marx's attempt, in *The German Ideology*, to “settle accounts with [his] former philosophical conscience” through a focused “critique of post-Hegelian philosophy” does not issue in a new knockdown *a priori* argument against the very idea of Genetico-Critical Explication (i.e. a sequel or successor to the Accommodation Argument). This does not mean, however, that Marx fails to provide us any clues about his reasons for abandoning Genetico-Critical Explication.

14. I take the obstacles to understanding Marx's reasons for rejecting Genetico-Critical Explication in *The German Ideology*, therefore, to be both objective (i.e. not the fault of individual readers), and irreducible (i.e. not the sort of unclarity one can dissolve simply by reading more of Marx's work, for instance). I think that we can overcome these obstacles, however, by examining what Marx does in *The German Ideology* in conjunction with what he says explicitly about method.

15. Though it is rarely remarked upon by his readers, Marx devotes the greater part of *The German Ideology* to identifying the role played by certain analogical models in the philosophical writings of some of his contemporaries (i.e. Feuerbach, Bauer, Stirner, Friedrich Herman Semmig, and Karl Grün). Models, in this sense, are images or metaphors one relies on in the formulation of a theory or framework. Marx derives his penchant for criticizing models from Feuerbach, who argues that much of traditional theology rests on wrongheaded analogical models (cf. §2.19).

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach argues that we can recognize the models or images employed in the formulation of a given framework as images only once we have rejected that framework. For traditional theology, for instance, the image of God that guides religious thought is "not an image, but the thing itself" (Feuerbach 1989: 177). It follows that criticizing a given image or model as unfruitful poses a serious threat to any framework employing that image, for "[w]ith the image falls the thing" (177). Marx's criticism of images, then, is not a mere exercise in rhetoric, nor ineffectual literary criticism, but a first-class contribution to his research program.

16. In *The German Ideology*, Marx targets two models in particular, each of which he identifies as giving rise to theories or methods characterized by a corresponding variety of pernicious conservatism. Two points stand out here. First, where Feuerbach criticizes models in order to

undermine the frameworks that depend on them, Marx also criticizes models in order to undermine methods. The transition from concern with frameworks to concern with methods is typical of the critical tradition in philosophy (cf. §1.20). Second, the two varieties of conservatism Marx attacks are the same two varieties he attacks in his earlier criticism of Rational Explication (cf. §§2.2-3).

17. The first and better-known model Marx targets is “the myth of the creation of the world” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 108) or “the domination of the idea” (181). I will refer to it as the “myth of creation.” This is the image of the world as created in the mind of God, or the material world as shaped and controlled by psychological, mental, rational, abstract, or spiritual forces.

A framework given rise to by the myth of creation need not make any reference to God, or to the determination of physical facts by non-physical powers. Marx recognizes the myth at work, for instance, in the theory that “politics [is] an independent sphere of activity” (468): that political events are best explained in terms of the good or bad intentions of political actors, rather than in terms of underlying economic circumstances. One of Marx’s aims is to show that the myth of creation takes many forms, and that it plays a role in shaping many more theories and frameworks than one would suppose—in ethics, in anthropology, in economics, even in the natural sciences.

18. Marx takes the myth of creation to be explanatorily unfruitful or regressive for the reason that it tends to give rise to theories characterized by a particular form of conservatism: what I referred to, in Ch. 2, as “practical conservatism” (cf. §2.2). Marx takes theories generated with the help of the myth of creation to systematically misidentify the causes of the phenomena they set out to explain. I will return to this claim, and to its roots in Feuerbach’s writings, in Ch. 7.

For example, Marx claims that the myth of creation plays a role in giving rise to Stirner's theory that money can be abolished just by getting certain self-defeating ideas out of our heads. According to Marx, Stirner "believes that any Berlin writer could abolish the 'truth of money' with the same ease as he abolishes in his mind the 'truth' of God or of Hegelian philosophy" (203). In fact, we cannot eliminate money just by changing our minds. By systematically misrepresenting the causal structure of the world, such theories frustrate our practical efforts to control that world, and in this way function, in practice, as "an apology for existing conditions" (516). Thus, Marx claims that frameworks shaped by the myth of creation give us systematically bad practical advice.

19. The second model Marx targets is the myth of "the philosopher's stone"—an element possessing "the miraculous power of leading from the realm of language and thought to actual life" (447) or "from the realm of God to the realm of Man" (56). In an early article, the "Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood," Marx mocks "so-called historians" for appealing to a "philosopher's stone for turning every sordid claim into the pure gold of right" (Marx 1975: 230).

As Marx puts it, the philosopher's stone arises in the epistemological context of "the transition from thought to reality, hence from language to life," and it consists in the image of "a word which, as a *word*, form[s] the transition in question, which, as a word, ceases to be simply a word, and which, as a word, in a mysterious superlinguistic manner, points from within language to the actual object it denotes" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 449). This is some single element, accessible in principle to every epistemic inquirer, which, if discovered, validates all of our intellectual work, transforming base metals into gold, fantasy into reality, opinion into knowledge. It is a guarantor of certainty in judgment: once it is in our reach, we no longer need doubt ourselves.

20. Like the myth of creation, the philosopher's stone shapes a wide variety of theories and methods. Marx, however, is especially interested in the role it plays in shaping the approaches to philosophical method favored by his peers. He maintains that it helps give rise to methods characterized by a particular sort of conservatism: what I have called "cognitive conservatism" (cf. §2.3), and more specifically "conceptual accommodation" (cf. §2.5). Thus, Marx's reflections on the philosopher's stone concern the same sort of conservatism as his Accommodation Argument.

21. I will devote the second part of this chapter to explaining why Marx takes appeals to the philosopher's stone to result in conceptual accommodation. It is clear, however, that he does hold this to be the case. Thus, he writes that Stirner, whose method involves appeal to the philosopher's stone, just by dint of employing that method "continually takes the world outlook derived from Hegel, and which has become traditional for him, as the *real world*, and 'manoeuvres' on that basis" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 173). By deploying his method, which falls prey to the philosopher's stone, Stirner retains an overlarge portion of the A-frameworks he criticizes.

In this way, "the 'restoration of all things' according to the Christian model is brought about" (320; and cf. §2.27), and Stirner inadvertently "confirms his obdurate conservatism" (415).

22. Like the Accommodation Argument, Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone is rarely acknowledged or commented upon.¹ In his version of the Accommodation Argument, Marx argues that Rational Explication cannot but give rise to conceptual accommodations. Marx's argument is an *a priori* refutation of any method possessing a certain set of attributes. It follows that it paints not just Rational Explication, but a whole family of similar methods, as excessively conservatism.

¹ For a brief discussion, see Murray (1988, pp. 60-62). As far as I know, the only extended discussion of the philosopher's stone in English is McQuillan (2007). Unfortunately, this is not a serious bit of philosophical writing.

23. Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone also bears on a whole family of possible methods: namely, all methods generated with the help of the philosopher's stone. It differs from the Accommodation Argument, however, in two senses. First, it is far weaker: contrary to Feuerbach's suggestion (cf. §5.15), showing that a given model is unfruitful, and thus that it tends to produce inadequate methods, does not rule those methods out *a priori*. It does cast suspicion on them, insofar as it suggests that they may well suffer from an expected set of intellectual vices. It is always possible, in principle, however, to interpret an otherwise unfruitful model by a theory, framework, or method that lacks the intellectual vices traditionally associated with that model.

Thus, inquirers may elect, as a rule of thumb, to avoid frameworks that emerge from unfruitful models, but to establish that a given framework is inadequate—even one given rise to by an unfruitful model—requires examining the worked-out details of that framework.

Second, Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone applies to a broader set of methods than the Accommodation Argument: the philosopher's stone can be interpreted in many ways, and can therefore generate a wide variety of methods, many of which will involve neither of the core components of Rational Explication. By criticizing the philosopher's stone, Marx casts doubt on all of these methods. It follows that his mature criticism is more wide-sweeping in its implications.

24. My central thesis in this chapter is that Marx's recognition that the philosopher's stone is unfruitful, and gives rise to frameworks and methods guilty of an excessive cognitive conservatism, puts him in position to recognize that Genetico-Critical Explication fails to split the horns of the dilemma raised by the Accommodation Argument. I will say more about what I mean by this in the discussion that follows. A consequence, however, is that Genetico-Critical

Explication suffers from the same conceptual conservatism problem as Rational Explication, and is therefore not satisfactory as a method for philosophy, given the demands of the critical program.

25. Note, however, that I do not claim that Marx proves this by his criticism of the philosopher's stone. As just clarified, this criticism does not amount to a new knockdown argument against explicative inference. Rather, I hold that the Accommodation Argument, just by itself, in its maximally general form, already rules out Genetico-Critical Explication as unduly conservative.

Marx's reliance on that method in his early writings, therefore, constitutes a misstep and an oversight on his part—though I will argue in the next chapter that the views Marx arrives at by way of Genetico-Critical Explication play an essential heuristic role in shaping his mature views.

26. My thesis, rather, is the quasi-psychological, quasi-historical one that it is only by recognizing the role played by the philosopher's stone in shaping Genetico-Critical Explication that Marx is equipped to detect his own previous failure to draw out the consequences of his Accommodation Argument, and rule against Genetico-Critical Explication.

I say that this thesis is quasi-psychological and quasi-historical because, ultimately, there is no definite biographical evidence to support my contention. I mean to make a claim only about what Marx is "in position to recognize" or "equipped to detect." That is, my aim is to show how Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone provides him with the epistemic resources necessary to recognize the mistake embodied in his own earlier commitment to Genetico-Critical Explication. This is sufficient to show that Marx's shift in method is philosophically well-motivated, which is my principal object. Marx himself may well come to his mature attitude by exactly this path. For strictly philosophical purposes, however, it is a matter of indifference.

5.2. The Philosopher's Stone / The Myth of the Given

27. I will now reconstruct Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone as it figures in *The German Ideology*. In subsequent part of the chapter, I will turn to the question how this criticism bears on various procedures that can be seen to rely upon the model. Marx's most direct criticism of the philosopher's stone emerges in the context of his discussion of Stirner's philosophical egoism. Stirner, a late disciple of Bruno Bauer, employs a version of the Rational Explication schema. I will first provide a reconstruction of Stirner's proposal, and then introduce Marx's criticism of it.

28. Stirner maintains a somewhat ambivalent relationship to Rational Explication. He makes use of the method in his work, declaring that he is "no opponent of criticism [i.e., in the specifically Bauerian sense]," and thus "no dogmatist" (Stirner 2017: 164). However, he also recognizes a conservatism problem for Rational Explication. According to Stirner, the advocate for Rational Explication "remains on one and the same terrain as the dogmatist," insofar as both take existing A-frameworks for granted (163-64). The only difference is that Rational Explication "asserts the process of thinking against the orthodoxy of thought, progress in thinking against stagnation of it" (164). Thus, even if Rational Explication rejects some thoughts, it is optimistic about the prospects for thought in general: it supposes that our explications will someday converge upon the truth.

29. Stirner's worry is not just that R-frameworks produced by Rational Explication will retain too much from their predecessors, but that the process of explication will be interminable. He doubts that Rational Explication will ever converge upon a single, final framework that no longer contains any logical or semantical inconsistencies (cf. §3.46), and therefore no longer admits of explication.

Like the even later disciple of Bauer, Karl Schmidt, Stirner holds that criticism by Rational Explication “is the road which must be travelled to reach ... solid ground; but whoever travels this road, never arrives” (K. Schmidt 1983: 410). Schmidt, however, maintains that there is nothing to be done about this predicament: one can either leave off criticism altogether, thus abandoning the enlightenment program in philosophy, or one can accept the interminable character of explication.

30. Confronted with this dilemma, Stirner introduces a third horn: he claims that “[i]f the previous assumptions [i.e., A-frameworks] are to melt away in a complete dissolution, they cannot again be resolved into a higher assumption [i.e., an R-framework], i.e., a thought, thinking itself, criticism” (Stirner 2017: 168). Thus, Stirner diagnoses Rational Explication’s conservatism problem (i.e. its retention of inadequate commitments along an infinitely long sequence of possible explications) as stemming from the fact that it always explicates concepts in terms of other concepts. He suggests that, to avoid retaining assumptions interminably, Rational Explication must dissolve the concepts of the A-framework not into R-framework concepts, but into something other than concepts.

This suggestion should raise alarm bells. Given that dissolution works roughly like reduction (cf. §2.38), what could we possibly dissolve a concept into other than another concept?

31. Thus, Stirner accepts Rational Explication, after a fashion, and he accepts explicative inference as his procedure of discovery—but he proposes to identify a regress stopper for the interminable sequence of explications he anticipates will follow. This means that he must identify some non-conceptual element to which one can infer, by explicative inference, to resolve inconsistencies in prior frameworks. The non-conceptual element he selects for this role is what he calls “the unique.”

32. Stirner picks up where Feuerbach stops. He allows, for instance, that Hegel's concept of <God> can be explicated in terms of Feuerbach's concept of <man>. The concept <man>, however, remains a concept. Stirner writes that "in Feuerbach, ... the expression 'human being' is supposed to describe the absolute *I*, the species," understood as "an ideal," and as "something to be thought" (Stirner 2017: 195). The unique, on the other hand, is "the transient, individual *I*" (195). That is, the unique is a first-personally conscious human individual, not some generality realized by many such individuals. The claim, here, is that concepts always pick out generalities, but the first-personally conscious human individual is absolutely singular, not describable in terms of any other.

33. Stirner also accepts Hegel's view that the concept under which a thing falls is "an *ought-to-be*," to which it "may or may not be adequate" (Hegel 1969: 657). Thus, concepts always involve a normative or teleological element, such that a given plant, for instance, will more or less successfully realize the concept <plant> depending on how closely it realizes the essence of planthood. Stirner claims, however, that the first-personally conscious human individual is not the sort of thing that can be evaluated in terms of better or worse; as a first-personally conscious human individual, "*I am my species, am without norm, without law, without model*" (Stirner 2017: 195), and thus "no *concept* expresses me" (377). Where there can be no norm, there can be no concept.

34. Stirner goes on to infer from this that the term 'unique' refers to the first-personally conscious human individual by something like direct reference, without mediation by a concept or definite description. Stirner thinks this direct-referential character qualifies the unique, in particular, as a suitable regress stopper for Rational Explication. If we can dissolve our A-framework directly into the unique, rather than into a candidate R-framework, then we can (presumably) bring the sequence

of explications to a halt. Allow me to reiterate that Stirner is here proposing that we dissolve the concept <man> into the unique (i.e. the first-personally conscious human individual), not into ‘unique’ (i.e. the six-letter word), nor into the concept <unique>, which he claims cannot exist.

35. It should be clear, from my reconstruction, that Stirner is confused. To demand that explicative inference generate as consequent not a claim or a concept, but a first-personally conscious human individual is a piece of nonsense on the order of demanding that an arithmetical operation produce not a sum or a quotient, but the look and feel of asbestos. This confusion is partly concealed, on Stirner’s original presentation, by obscure language and poetizing—but it is not hard to uncover.

Like both Feuerbach and Marx, Stirner derives his criticism of Rational Explication’s conservatism from Schelling. Recall, however, that Schelling raises two separate charges against Rational Explication. First, he claims that Rational Explication cannot determine which of its concepts describe what is, because it makes no contact with non-conceptual reality (cf. §2.11). Second, he claims that Rational Explication falls into an excessive conservatism because it fails to correct against representational error in the concepts it subjects to reform (cf. §2.15). In Stirner’s case, these two concerns are run together: he holds that Rational Explication falls into conservatism because it makes no contact with non-conceptual reality, and introduces the unique, in a confused way, to secure this contact. From a strictly philological point of view, this explains Stirner’s error.

36. Despite its patent absurdity, however, the idea that concepts should somehow dissolve or reduce to a non-conceptual foundation exercises a certain allure. The sort of confusion into which Stirner falls has a venerable history in philosophy. Many philosophers have supposed, for instance, that we can infer sentences or judgments from non-conceptual items like sense data (cf. Russell

1997 [1917]; Broad 1925; Price 1950; Ayer 1956). The idea that the problem of knowledge, for instance, can be resolved by some easy commerce between conceptual and non-conceptual items is attractive to most philosophers, at least at the outset of their philosophical education. Given this fact, we have *prima facie* reason to believe that Stirner's confusion, understood as an instance of a definite class of confusions, owes not just to subjective error, but to some objectively misleading feature of the world (cf. §3.39). This is the approach Marx himself takes in his criticism of Stirner.

37. Marx understands the challenge Stirner sets for himself—the problem of stopping the regress ostensibly threatened by Rational Explication—as the task of “descend[ing] from the world of thought to the actual world” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 446). He takes it that, in proposing that we reduce <man> to the unique, Stirner is trying to reestablish a connection between our thinking and the real world to which it is (presumably) meant to answer. Stirner himself frames the problem in these terms. He claims, for instance, that “[i]n the unique, science can dissolve into life” (Stirner 2012: 59). By dissolving thought into the unique, Stirner claims to put us in contact with reality.

38. Thus, Stirner arrives at his nonsense claim about the unique with the help of a definite image of the nature of the conservatism problem facing Rational Explication. He visualizes the practitioner of Rational Explication as trapped at the level of thought, as one might find oneself trapped on the top floor of a building, unable to access the goings-on of lower floors. Motivated by the metaphor of thought as a prison or snare from which one must escape, Stirner proposes that we dissolve our concepts down to the non-conceptual unique in order to pierce through to the lower levels (i.e. to arrive at something real, and escape the prison, or the snare, or the top floor).

The value of the unique, for Stirner, consists in its potential to secure the legitimacy of our thinking by allowing it to culminate not just in more thinking, but in something real. Framed in this way, laden with images, Stirner's effort is less likely to strike us as absurd. What Marx detects in Stirner's proposal, however, is the influence of the philosopher's stone: the unique just is the philosopher's stone itself, "a '*word*' which as such would possess the miraculous power of leading from the realm of language and thought to actual life" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 337), making our escape from the prison of thought and language (and our concomitant return to real life) possible.

39. It is in this context that Marx formulates his criticism of the philosopher's stone. I will here revisit some lines I have already cited. Fairly late in *The German Ideology*, Marx writes that

... the whole problem of the transition from thought to reality, hence from language to life, exists only in philosophical illusion, i.e., it is justified only for philosophical consciousness, which cannot possibly be clear about the nature and origin of its apparent separation from life. This great problem, insofar as it at all entered the minds of our ideologists, was bound, of course, to result finally in one of these knights-errant setting out in search of a word which, as a *word*, formed the transition in question, which, as a word, ceases to be simply a word, and which, as a word, in a mysterious superlinguistic manner, points from within language to the actual object it denotes; which, in short, plays among words the same role as the Redeeming God-Man plays among people in Christian fantasy (449).

40. Allow me to unpack this passage. First, Marx claims that Stirner's solution to the conservatism problem he identifies for Rational Explication (i.e. dissolving concepts into some underlying non-conceptual element in order to secure their contact with reality) involves a conflation or mongrelization of two classes of entity: words or concepts on one hand, and super-linguistic or super-conceptual entities on the other. The element is mongrel insofar as it functions both as a concept, and as a non-conceptual cause. This mongrel element just is the philosopher's stone.

Second, Marx compares the philosopher's stone to the image of Christ, half-God and half-man, whose function among men is to redeem them in the eyes of God (i.e. to reestablish a lost

connection). Third, Marx claims that Stirner is “bound” to seek a solution of the sort he does insofar as he frames his problem in terms of “the transition from thought to reality.” Fourth, Marx claims that Stirner’s formulation of the problem, along with the solution this formulation leads him to, are products of “philosophical illusion.” By this, Marx means both that (i) the models that Stirner relies on are themselves misleading; and (ii) that their apparent usefulness can be explained, by genetic exculpation, in terms of certain features of the real world: namely the real “separation from life” experienced by philosophers (cf. §4.68). The details of this genetic exculpation depend on Marx’s mature R-framework, which I have not yet introduced, so I leave them aside for now.

41. Thus, Marx criticizes Stirner’s proposed explication of <man> in terms of the unique on the grounds that it relies on a misleading or unfruitful model for theorizing about human cognition. He does not make explicit, however, why he takes the model to be unfruitful. There is a hint, however, in Marx’s comparison of the philosopher’s stone to the figure of Christ, or the God-Man. Using this phrase, Marx is plausibly referring to a passage (with which his readers will have been familiar) in Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*.

42. In an appendix titled “Contradiction of the God-Man,” Feuerbach writes that

[t]he divine nature, notwithstanding the position that Christ was at once God and man, is just as much dis severed from the human nature *in* the incarnation as *before* it, since each nature excludes the conditions of the other, although both are united in one personality, in an incomprehensible, miraculous, *i.e.*, untrue manner, in contradiction with the relation in which, according to their definition, they stand to each other (Feuerbach 1989: 333-34).

Thus, on Feuerbach’s account, Christ is not a genuine union of God and man. The human nature is defined as non-divine, and the divine nature is defined as non-human. A single person possessing both of these natures will not amount to a union of the divine and the mundane, but a being whose

very definition contains a contradiction. In his explication of traditional theology, Feuerbach purports to resolve the inconsistencies in the concept <God-Man>, arguing that Christ was really just a man, though “one who represents all” (336). Thus, he dissolves <God-Man> into <man>, and reconsiders the significance of the Christian redemption myth in light of that dissolution.

43. Accordingly, on Feuerbach’s account, Christ is not God at all, but a paradigmatic token of the human species: “Christ suffered only as man, not as God” (333). Now, the special function of Christ is supposed to be that he serves as an anchor, within the human world, to the divine. Because Christ is (ostensibly) given to us by God, from the divine world, yet circulates among us as a human being, we are right to believe that, following him, we are ourselves connected to the divine.

To perform this function, however, Christ must in fact possess certain distinctly non-human powers. He must in fact be a gift from the divine to the human world. Feuerbach claims that he is not—that he is simply a man. Thus, he argues that “Christian worship the human individual as the supreme being,” though “[n]ot ... consciously, for it is the unconsciousness of this fact which constitutes the illusion of the religious principle” (336). This means that, although they take the correctness of their beliefs and practices to be guaranteed by a direct link to God, Christ’s followers may in fact retain, as dogmas, a totally arbitrary set of beliefs and customs, not rooted in the divine.

44. Why, then, does Marx take the philosopher’s stone to be misleading or unfruitful as a model for thinking about the structure of human cognition? Following the pattern of Feuerbach’s treatment of the God-Man, we can reconstruct his criticism along these lines.

First, the unique is not a genuine union of conceptual representation with non-conceptual reality: <the unique> is simply a concept, mistaken, by Stirner, for something more. For Stirner,

however, <the unique> performs a special function: it is supposed to be a gift from non-conceptual reality, and thus serves as an anchor, within the realm of concepts, to that reality. On Stirner's proposal, the way to stop an interminable regress of explications is to dissolve the concepts of our A-frameworks into the unique, and thus fix them, from without, by an element of the super-conceptual world. Because <the unique> is just a concept, it cannot in fact perform this function.

45. Thus, though he takes himself to have escaped from the realm of thought—and thus takes the correctness of his thinking to be vouchsafed by a direct link to non-conceptual reality—Stirner in fact retains a totally arbitrary set of concepts, which he now supposes to be immune to criticism. The result is that Stirner engages, inadvertently, in conceptual accommodation. He takes a given set of concepts for granted on the false premise that their adequacy is guaranteed by reality itself.

This much Marx makes clear. He claims that Stirner displays his “gigantic faith” by “tak[ing] as literal truth all the illusions of German speculative philosophy” (171), that he “accepts in good faith the illusions of politicians, lawyers and other ideologists” (355), and he “takes both the hypocritical phrases of people and their illusions for the true motives of their actions” (161). The philosopher's stone is misleading, therefore, because it can lead us to suppose, wrongly, that certain of our concepts are guaranteed adequate by being fixed from without, and thus to inadvertently betray our own critical purposes. It tends to produce excessive conservatism.

46. I have focused on Stirner's model for his proposed solution (i.e. the philosopher's stone), rather than on his model for the problem (i.e. the prison of thought).² In claiming that, by accepting the

² For an approach that focuses instead on the prison of thought, though not under that name, and without reference to Stirner, see Suchting (1986a). Suchting's treatment is much influenced by Althusser (1969b). He criticizes the prison of thought model in roughly the same terms as John Dewey criticizes what he calls the

problem, an inquirer is “bound” to embrace this solution, Marx suggests that there is some common ground that links the two together. The prison of thought model suggests that we construe knowledge as the sort of thing one obtains by escaping one domain (i.e. thought) and gaining access to another (i.e. reality). The philosopher’s stone suggests that the key element that makes knowledge possible is a mongrel entity, belonging both to the one domain and to the other.

Notably, though each of these models represents the activity of inquiry as something that begins in the realm of thought, both also represent knowledge itself as achievable only on condition that some pre-existing element in the real of reality is accessed or captured by the inquirer. Thus, though cognitive states arise and pass away wholly within the realm of thought, they are, according to this picture, fixed or decided externally, in reality. This is the basic content of the picture of human cognition to which the prison of thought and the philosopher’s stone models both belong.

47. This deeper model—presupposed both by Stirner’s question, and his proposed solution—just is what Sellars calls “the myth of the given” (W. Sellars 1991: §26). Many readers of Sellars take his criticism of the myth of the given to be an *a priori* argument of some sort. As Daniel Bonevac rightly points out, however, Sellars never succeeds in giving any such knockdown argument (cf. Bonevac 2002). I have argued elsewhere that Sellars’s well-known criticism is best understood as a naturalistic argument to the effect that the myth of the given is unfruitful as an analogical model for developing theories of human cognition (cf. Dallman m.s.). In this sense, the myth of the given is similar in its structure to what Popper calls “instruction from without” (Popper 1994: 8). It is a model of knowledge as the sort of thing that is imposed upon inquirers from without, such that, once cognitive states are fixed, they are certain, and thus do not admit of further critique.

“spectator conception of knowledge,” as “a mere beholding or viewing of reality” (Dewey 1920: 112). Both target basic assumptions underlying traditional epistemology, understood as concerned with the problem of knowledge.

48. The myth of the given is unfruitful, even pernicious, as a model, because it tends to give rise to theories or methods that insulate certain among our beliefs from criticism. Thus, adherents to the critical program in philosophy do well, as a rule, to avoid such frameworks and methods as are given rise to by the myth of the given—though establishing that these do in fact violate the requirements of the critical program will require case-by-case examination of individual theories and methods. It is this model, the myth of the given, that Marx rejects as unfruitful in his criticism of Stirner. The philosopher’s stone is best understood as a special case of the myth of the given. Nevertheless, in what follows, I will refer to it only as “the philosopher’s stone,” to avoid confusing *de re* and *de dicto* uses of “the myth of the given,” generating the false appearance of anachronism.

49. Notably, Althusser also recognizes that Marx rejects the model of knowledge as given. He claims that, in his mature writings, Marx rejects “the mirror myth of knowledge as the vision of a given object or the reading of an established text” (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 19). Althusser fails, however, to identify the role this rejection plays in justifying or rationalizing Marx’s change of method in 1845. He fails even to locate the rejection in *The German Ideology*, or call the philosopher’s stone by its name. By the end of this chapter, I hope to have improved on his account.

5.3. Empirical Calibration

50. Having reconstructed Marx’s criticism of the philosopher’s stone, I turn now to showing how that criticism bears on particular methods. In the next part of the chapter, I will argue that rejecting the philosopher’s stone leads Marx to reject explicative inference as a procedure of discovery.

I will begin with a brief detour, however, and show how Marx's rejection of the philosopher's stone bears on another procedure, not yet discussed. In particular, I will argue that Marx's rejection of the philosopher's stone rules out his endorsing any direct or naïve empiricist procedure of discovery, such as would select concepts directly in terms of their empirical adequacy. This will answer the question, raised earlier in the dissertation, why Marx never resorts to a procedure of this sort (cf. §3.55). It will also provide a simple example of the sort of reasoning that is involved in the criticism of procedures for their reliance on unfruitful analogical models.

51. As discussed in Ch. 2, the excessive conservatism of Rational Explication owes in part to (i) its preservation of core contents across explications, and in part to (ii) its failure to correct against representational error (cf. §2.45). On a long enough timeline, Rational Explication will (in principle) eliminate all logical and semantical inconsistencies, but it will reproduce as output roughly the same empirical content we provide to it as input—no matter the quality of that content.

To avoid this outcome, Genetico-Critical Explication retains explicative inference as its procedure of discovery, but substitutes a more discriminating procedure of justification for Rational Explication's flimsy coherence test. Thus, Marx comes to adopt the genetic exculpation procedure of justification, hoping to ensure that frameworks arrived at by explicative inference in fact improve upon the representational adequacy of their predecessors. This is the rational genealogy of the developments in Marx's method as I have reconstructed it thus far.

52. If Marx's aim, in adopting Genetico-Critical Explication, is simply to ensure that (i) R-frameworks no longer preserve inadequate contents across explications, and (ii) that they improve upon the representational adequacy of their predecessors, there would seem to be a simpler route.

Marx can simply replace the explicative inference procedure of discovery by some procedure that fits our empirical concepts directly to how the world really is. A procedure of this sort would modify the A-framework not just when its constitutive principles contradict one another, but whenever they fail to conform to the world as it is given to the practitioner's senses. Call this procedure of discovery "empirical calibration." It will (presumably) resolve the Accommodation Problem, insofar as it enjoins rejecting any preservation of core contents across explications. It will also eliminate the need for any backward-looking check (e.g. genetic exculpation) on improvement of fit across frameworks. Why does Marx not opt for this procedure?

53. The first objection to empirical calibration is that, by canceling any preservation of contents across explications, it cuts Marx off from his solution to the Continuity Problem: the question how answers framed in the conceptual vocabulary of the R-framework can be understood as rational, non-topic-changing responses to questions framed in the conceptual vocabulary of the A-framework (cf. §1.69). Because it preserves core contents across explications, Genetico-Critical Explication can establish discursive continuity between A-framework and R-framework: it shows that answering A-framework questions with R-framework answers makes sense because the R-framework emerges, by necessity, from the A-framework—such that any reasoner who reflects for long enough on the discursive consequences of their A-framework commitments will, in principle, come to endorse and deploy those commitments' R-framework counterparts (cf. §3.20).

54. To give up the preservation of core contents across explications, therefore, is to give up discursive continuity. Why does this matter? First, this leaves Marx without a solution to the Continuity Problem. He will either have to arrive at a weaker alternative, or bite the bullet and

accept that R-framework answers do change the topic when posed as responses to A-framework questions. Any alternative will be weaker because discursive continuity establishes the tightest possible connection, short of identity, between a framework and its immediate predecessor.

Second, it is only in virtue of its discursive-continuity-based solution to the Continuity Problem that Genetico-Critical Explication qualifies as a perennial method in philosophy—as a method that takes philosophical discovery to consist in our bringing out or elucidating what we already know (cf. §1.34). Giving up the preservation of core contents across explications, then, means giving up Genetico-Critical Explication’s connection to the Platonic and Aristotelian mainstream of philosophical tradition. A variety of downstream consequences would follow.

55. Desire to secure discursive continuity surely plays a role in motivating Marx’s choice to retain explicative inference (rather than some other procedure) on Genetico-Critical Explication. As objections to the viability of empirical calibration, however, these considerations come up short.

As I will argue in the next chapter, Marx does in fact come to bite the bullet on discursive continuity, endorsing a far weaker sort of continuity between A-framework and R-framework than one finds at work in perennial methods. It follows that failure to secure discursive continuity (or some comparably strong solution to the Continuity Problem) does not preclude a method from consideration by Marx. It turns out, therefore, that issues relating to the Continuity Problem figure not at all in Marx’s reasons for ruling out the empirical calibration procedure of discovery.

56. The second objection to empirical calibration—and the only one that sticks—concerns its empiricism. What distinguishes empirical calibration from other possible procedures of discovery is that it (ostensibly) allows us to arrive at new concepts without relying on any of our previously

held concepts—appealing only to how the world actually is. Thus, empirical calibration (ostensibly) outstrips any possibility of conceptual conservatism by taking no guidance whatsoever from the A-framework in its formation of the R-framework. This is the procedure’s basic promise.

57. To fulfill this promise, however, empirical calibration will ultimately depend on some version of concept empiricism. On Jesse Prinz’s formulation, concept empiricism is the claim that “[a]ll (human) concepts are copies or combinations of copies of perceptual representations” (Prinz 2002: 108). Perceptual representations, in this sense, are non-conceptual representations (i.e. sensations, sense impressions, or sense data). On Prinz’s definition, concept empiricism is a thesis in the metaphysics of concepts; it claims that all concepts have the same nature. I will use the term “concept empiricism” to refer to a weaker thesis: that it is possible for a (human) concept to be a mere copy of a perceptual representation. I take empirical calibration to entail this weaker thesis.

Showing Prinz’s concept empiricism true requires showing that no concepts are anything other than copies or combinations of copies of perceptual representations. Showing concept empiricism in my sense true only requires showing that one concept has been, is, or could be such a copy. On the other hand, showing Prinz’s concept empiricism false is far easier: we need only show that not all concepts consist of copies of sense data. Showing concept empiricism in my sense false requires showing that no concept can, even in principle, consist just in such copies.

58. Empirical calibration presupposes concept empiricism (on our weaker definition) because it maintains that empirical data can shape our concepts in a way that does not depend on other of our concepts. Suppose that I am revising a given A-framework by empirical calibration. There are two ways to conceive of this operation: either (i) in generating an R-framework that is better fitted to

the empirical data, I rely upon A-framework concepts to, for instance, describe what I am seeing, such that my new concepts are at least partially determined by my existing concepts; or (ii) I do not rely on the A-framework to describe the sense data that shape my R-framework concepts.

Now, empirical calibration is designed specifically to eliminate the *a priori* dependency of R-framework concepts on A-framework concepts. Allowing A-framework concepts to play a determining role in the description of the empirical data that shape our R-framework concepts simply reinstates this *a priori* dependency at another level. Advocates for empirical calibration must insist, therefore, that it does not depend for its application on any A-framework concepts.

59. It follows that empirical calibration cannot rely on any moderate or reformed empiricism such as recognizes that all empirical observation draws on received concepts. In the next chapter, I will argue that Marx in fact endorses an empiricism of this sort on his mature method. Where empirical calibration is concerned, however, this is simply not sufficient. If we acknowledge that observation relies on the A-framework, we admit that we cannot rule out conservatism by way of observation.

Thus, empirical calibration is intelligible as a solution against the threat of conceptual accommodation only on the supposition that it is possible for empirical data to directly shape the R-framework concepts, bypassing the A-framework altogether. This means that either (i) concepts are sufficiently alike in their structure to empirical data that it makes sense to conceive of them as direct copies of those data; or (ii) the process of concept formation is somehow directly guided by the empirical data, such that the concepts it generates are indirect copies of those data. On either scenario, empirical calibration requires that at least some of our concepts are copies of sense data.

60. Thus, empirical calibration presupposes concept empiricism. As I have already argued (cf. §3.56), however, Marx rejects concept empiricism. It follows that he cannot endorse empirical calibration. However, Marx never gives an explicit argument against concept empiricism. Kant, Hegel, and Feuerbach do. Each of them gives an *a priori* argument against the thesis as I have defined it. In reconstructing Marx's reasons for rejecting concept empiricism, and thus empirical calibration, it will be useful to have these earlier arguments in view. I will review them each now.

61. In his "Jäsche Logic," Kant concedes to the concept empiricist that "[a]n empirical concept arises from the senses through comparison of objects of experience," claiming that it "attains through the understanding [i.e., through the deployment of antecedently possessed concepts] merely the form of universality" (Kant 1992b: 590). Thus, empirical concepts are derived from empirical experience. In this process, however, we begin with particular objects of experience, and arrive at general (or "universal") concepts, applicable to many such objects.

Empirical concepts, therefore, are not mere copies of empirical data. Kant claims that there are three operations involved in this transformation: "comparison" of empirical representations among one another; "reflection" on what constitutes their unity; and "abstraction" from their differences (592). Each of these moments, however, requires guidance by the observer's higher intellectual faculties. The comparison of two empirical objects, for instance, presupposes the capacity to recognize each as a particular entity persisting in time, and the capacity to recognize the two as existing simultaneously. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant argues that such capacities depend, in turn, on the guidance of certain "pure *a priori* concepts" (Kant 1998: A86/B119). These concepts are universal (i.e. available to all), on Kant's account, and, though they are not themselves innate, each of us derives them from powers of judgment that are themselves universal and innate.

62. Likewise, in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant claims that, through reflection on the empirical objects thus compared, we are able to arrive at “consensus in the comparison of natural forms,” and thus to “arrive at empirical concepts,” only by relying on a “special and at the same time transcendental principle” of reason (Kant 2000: 20:213). Thus, empirical concepts are not simple copies of empirical data. As the “Metaphysik Mrongovius” puts it, “if we did not have *a priori* concepts then we also would not obtain any [concepts],” because “[s]ensations [alone] make no concepts” (Kant 1997: 29:798; first brackets in original). Thus, according to Kant, concept formation always presupposes previously held concepts (i.e. the categories of the understanding).³

63. Like Kant, Hegel concedes some ground to the concept empiricist. He grants to John Locke, for instance, that “[e]veryone knows that he or she begins from experiences, from sensations, ... and that general ideas come later in time” (Hegel 1990: 172). He then allows that some mode of abstraction is involved in the transition from sensation to concept. In the subjective spirit section of the *Encyclopaedia*, for instance, he claims that “consciousness activates its independence from the material of sensation by raising it from the form of *individuality* into the form of *universality*, omitting what is purely contingent and holding on to the *essential*” (Hegel 2007: §402 Ad).

64. By this, Hegel does not mean to commit himself to the claim that human observers generate new concepts through this process of abstraction. In fact, he explicitly disavows such a view in the

³ The topic of Kant’s account of empirical concept formation is highly controversial. The reconstruction I give here is conceptualist in character. There are many competing nonconceptualist readings. For an overview of the conceptualism/nonconceptualism debate, see Allais (2016). For a discussion of the debate relating to empirical concept formation in particular, see Anderson (2015: Ch. 13). For general discussions of concept empiricism and Kant, see Allison (2015, pp. 276, 435), Rosenberg (2005, Ch. 1), and Westphal (2020). The term “concept empiricism” is sometimes used in a different way by Kant scholars, owing to its idiosyncratic use in Bennett (1974).

minor *Logic*, claiming that “[i]t is a mistake to assume that, first of all, there are objects which form the content of our representations, and then our subjective activity comes in afterwards to form concepts of them, through the operation of abstracting” (Hegel 1991b: §163 Ad 2).

Hegel is a conceptual realist. This means that the concepts we arrive at by abstracting away from the details of empirical data exist independently of us as observers; they antedate our investigation, and are contained within the empirical data. Thus, it is not sensation, but “the Concept [that] truly comes first” (§163 Ad 2). Hegel claims that this fact is expressed “in our religious consciousness” by the claim that “all finite things have emerged from the fullness of God’s thought” (§163 Ad 2). His meaning is that the concepts we arrive at through observation are, in effect, the same concepts employed by God, as blueprints, in his plans for the universe.⁴

65. There is a sense in which Hegel is in fact committed to the claim that our concepts are copies of the empirical data. These data themselves have the shape of God’s concept, and through observation our concepts come to have that shape as well, thereby copying the empirical data. Still, Hegel’s account is not a concept empiricism, because he does not conceive of perceptual representations as genuinely non-conceptual. He simply defines <concept> such that it refers to a mind-independent structure common to thoughts, sense data, and existing entities—a notion akin to Aristotle’s <form>. What Kant, Hegel, and the concept empiricist all share in common is their commitment to the view that (a subset of our) concepts are somehow derived from sensation.

⁴ The capitalized “Concept,” in the passage cited above, is a technical term, which refers (roughly) to the actually existing network of real concepts mirrored by the maximally adequate framework of deployable concepts. For a discussion of empirical concept formation in Hegel, see Inwood (1983, pp. 366-70). For a discussion of the role of sensation in Hegel’s account of empirical knowledge, see DeVries (1988, Ch. 4). For general discussions of concept empiricism and Hegel, see Westphal (1998) and Westphal (2018, pp. 149-55, 428).

Note, also, that on Hegel's view it is only at an advanced stage of historical development and personal maturation that observers can directly copy concepts from sensation. At lower stages of development, they derive only muddled approximations to those concepts. Which particular inadequate concepts they derive will depend on the level of development attained by society, and by their own level of intellectual maturity. In this sense, the observer "brings his categories with him, and they influence his vision of the data he has before him" (Hegel 1975: 29). Even in the ideal case, however, human concept formation does not fit to the concept empiricist's story.

66. Feuerbach, too, grants that "[e]mpiricism is perfectly justified in regarding ideas as originating from the senses" (Feuerbach 2012d: 231). Like both Kant and Hegel, however, he understands this claim in a way that precludes commitment to concept empiricism.

In particular, Feuerbach understands human perceptual representations to involve much more than simple sensations or sense impressions. On this point, he claims that "[i]f, as held by obtuse materialism and empiricism, the impressions from the object alone were decisive, then the animals could already ... be physicists" (2012b: 140). This is a bad argument, but it makes Feuerbach's commitments clear. Human perception, on his account, is irreducibly conceptual, such that we "find the supersensuous—spirit and reason—*within the sensuous*" (2012d: 232). I discussed this broad definition of perception above (cf. §2.46), and will discuss it again in Ch. 6.

67. Feuerbach is less clear than Hegel about the status and nature of the concepts we find in our observation data. He wants to grant neither (i) that the concepts are subjective, present only in the observer's mind, nor (ii) that they are objective, like God's concepts, and thus present already in the world. He makes clear, however, that "all is ... capable of being perceived through the senses,"

though not necessarily by “crude and vulgar senses, but only through those that are cultivated” (Feuerbach 2012d: 231). The better a given human observer realizes the ideal form of human being (i.e. of <man>), the better the observation they will produce. Contrary to the concept empiricist, Feuerbach holds that the formation of empirical concepts always draws upon the observer’s higher intellectual capacities. Concepts cannot be accounted for as copies of perceptual representations, for all perceptual representations are, as in Hegel, already conceptual (cf. Wartofsky 1977: 68-72).

68. Incidentally, Feuerbach also identifies a number of causal prerequisites to empirical concept formation, and to empirical knowledge more generally. He stresses the fact that it is only in virtue of having the particular human physiology that we have that empirical cognition is possible (cf. Feuerbach 2012b: 140-44). He also claims that empirical ostension—pointing to *this* empirical representation, rather than *that* one—presupposes space and time (cf. 2012d: 233-35). And he argues, somewhat murkily, that concept formation is possible only on condition that more than one human observer exists, as “the certitude of those things that exist outside me is given to me through the certitude of the existence of other men besides myself” (232).

Extending this last argument, Feuerbach claims that maximally veridical empirical knowledge of the universe is impossible for the lone individual, and thus requires the proliferation of the human species. He quotes Goethe to the effect that “[o]nly all men together ... cognize nature” (Feuerbach 2012e: 56).⁵ These arguments do not raise problems for concept empiricism *per se*, but challenge the specific variety of skepticism (often associated with concept empiricism)

⁵ The Hanfi translation omits Feuerbach’s citation of Goethe, but this can still be found in the original German. See Feuerbach (1904, p. 162). The quotation is drawn from an un dated letter in the Goethe-Schiller correspondence (which, because it is undated, is numbered differently, according to the whims of the editor, in each edition of the correspondence). To the above, Goethe adds the following: “I see in the many famous axioms only the expression of an individuality; and precisely that which is generally acknowledged as true is usually but the prejudice of the multitude, which is affected by the conditions of the age, and therefore also to be regarded as but one individuum” (Goethe and Schiller 1890, no. 466). Goethe serves as inspiration for both Feuerbach and Marx.

that grants the possibility of empirical concept formation, but denies the reality of space and time, or the existence of the observer's body, or of the bodies and minds of other human beings, etc.

69. Marx nowhere provides an explicit argument against concept empiricism, much less an *a priori* argument of the above sort. There are a few references to empiricism in Marx's writings. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, he repeats some of Feuerbach's conclusions about perception, but provides no arguments for them (cf. Marx and Engels 1975a: 300).⁶ There is a brief discussion of concept empiricism in *The Holy Family*, where Marx attributes to Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Condillac and others the "fundamental principle" of "the origin of all human knowledge and ideas from the world of sensation" (1975b: 129), and on which "our concepts, notions, and ideas are but the phantoms of the real world" (128). This discussion is strictly historical, however, and gives no arguments.

Later, in the methodological introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx makes his rejection of concept empiricism explicit: he claims that "the assimilation and transformation of perceptions and images into concepts," which generates a "conceptual totality [i.e., a framework]," is in fact "a product of the thinking mind" (Marx 1986a: 38). Still, however, he provides no real argument.

70. Some readers claim to locate an argument against concept empiricism in Marx's criticism, in *The German Ideology*, of "the highly restricted way in which Feuerbach recognises *sensuousness*" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 103; and cf. Easton 1970: 416; G.H. Fromm 2015: 20-21). In what senses

⁶ Marx writes here that, in the fully realized human being, the "*senses* have therefore become directly in their practice *theoreticians*" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 300). Because he takes for granted (without argument) that there are no substantial changes in Marx's thinking over the course of his career, James Farr takes this claim to prove that Marx rejects empiricism *for this very reason* throughout his career (cf. Farr 1983: 469; 1991: 110). Once we recognize that Marx's method undergoes change in time, and the degree to which his early views on perception presuppose (say) Feuerbach's explication of <man>, it is clear that Marx cannot retain the view, just as it is, over the course of his entire career. This is an example of how failure to attend to changes in Marx's method, and to the definite framework dependencies these changes ultimately legislate over, can muddle our interpretations of Marx.

is Feuerbach's conception restricted? Marx claims that Feuerbach "does not see that the sensuous world around him is not a thing given direct from all eternity," but is "an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations," such that "[e]ven the objects of the simplest 'sensuous certainty' are only given [to us] through social development" (39; and cf. 4).

71. Readers of this passage are misled, by Marx's use of the phrase "sensuous certainty," to think that he is addressing the same topic that Hegel addresses in the "Sense-Certainty" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "knowledge of the immediate" (Hegel 1977b: 58). Marx is not making any claim, here, about the theory-ladenness of protocol reports. He is not indicating that our descriptive concepts are products of "social development." Rather, he is concerned with the possible objects of sense perception. According to Marx, what Feuerbach fails to recognize is that the objects we perceive through the senses are themselves products of "social development," and in particular "products of industry and of the state of society" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 39).

Feuerbach claims that it is possible, in principle, to recognize the essence of a thing just by observing it through the senses. Where we fail to do so, this owes to our failure to realize the true essence of the human being. Marx claims, however, that this is a fundamental mistake, for the reason that the objects we observe in the world around us are the historical results of industry, such that we cannot directly infer from observation of how things are under current conditions to claims about their underlying, eternal, or transhistorical nature (i.e. their essence). Appearances mislead.

72. Thus, Marx does not criticize Feuerbach for endorsing concept empiricism (or even a naïve empiricist justificatory strategy). To do so would be a mistake, as Feuerbach does not endorse any

view of this sort in the works Marx responds to (i.e. the “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future,” the “Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy,” and *The Essence of Christianity*).

73. Notably, Marx here reproduces Feuerbach’s strategy, discussed just above (cf. §5.68), of identifying causal prerequisites to perception. Thus, he writes that, were industry “interrupted only for a year, Feuerbach would not only find an enormous change in the natural world, but would very soon find the whole world of men and his own perceptive faculty, nay his own existence, were missing” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 40). Marx’s suggestion is as follows: observation is possible only in case the observer remains alive; the observer can go on living only in case their basic needs are satisfied; they can satisfy their basic needs only in case the means for satisfying those needs have been produced; and the production of those means presupposes an entire system of production. Thus, on Marx’s mature R-framework, which I will discuss in Ch. 7, the entire world of industry stands as a causal prerequisite to every (current-day) act of observation.

As above, however, this argument does not target concept empiricism *per se*. It only challenges those who would claim that empirical concept formation is possible in abstraction from the real-world conditions that its objects (i.e. that concept formation is possible in a vacuum).

74. The same readers sometimes claim to scent an argument against concept empiricism in Marx’s claim, elsewhere in *The German Ideology*, that “empiricists” can make sense of history only as a “collection of dead facts” (37; and cf. Easton 1970: 416; Farr 1983: 466; G.H. Fromm 2015: 16). These readers suppose that what Marx means, when he says that, for the empiricists, facts are “dead,” is that they are non-conceptual, and therefore depend not at all on the deliverances of reason.

75. Marx makes no such suggestion. Rather, in this passage, he is simply contrasting his own mature anthropological R-framework favorably with other frameworks. He claims that his own framework describes “men, not in any fantastic isolation and fixity [i.e., not in their ahistorical essence], but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions” (37). Thus, Marx describes his framework as having two virtues: (i) it describes the empirical facts about the relations in which human individuals stand to one another; and (ii) it explains why the human individuals stand in just those relations to one another, and not others.

Marx contrasts two competing frameworks to his own: that of the “idealists,” and that of the “empiricists.” The idealist framework is inadequate because it fails even to grasp the empirical facts: it instead describes “an imagined activity of imagined subjects” (37). The empiricist, by contrast, succeeds in picking out the basic facts, but fails to explain them. It leaves them “dead” rather than framing them in terms of the “active life-process” that produces them (37).

76. The “empiricists” Marx has in mind are almost certainly not Berkeley or Hume, but 19th-century German advocates of the so-called “objective historiography,” such as Leopold von Ranke. As Frederick Beiser writes, “Ranke was crucial in raising the scientific status of history in nineteenth-century Germany,” but was often received as “a hardheaded pedant who insisted that the chief purpose of history is to ascertain facts and nothing but the facts” (Beiser 2011: 254).

Marx cites Ranke elsewhere in *The German Ideology* (cf. Marx and Engels 1975c: 301), and criticizes the objective historiography for “treating the historical relations separately from

activity [i.e., from the activity that produces them]” (55).⁷ Thus, Marx’s “dead facts” criticism has nothing to do with concept empiricism, or any other variety of philosophical empiricism. He does not criticize the objective historiographers for their views on concept formation or epistemic justification—they have none—but for the inadequacy of their approach to historical explanation.

77. I have made a case that Marx has no *a priori* argument against concept empiricism. How, then, do we account for his rejection of the doctrine, despite its popularity among earlier naturalists? And how, then, do we account for Marx’s disinterest in the empirical calibration procedure of discovery, despite its status as a prominent alternative to explicative inference? The simplest route is to treat Marx’s commitment (i.e. his rejection of concept empiricism) as an unargued-for inheritance from Hegel and Feuerbach. I will show that a more charitable rendering is available.

Concept empiricism, and the empirical calibration procedure that presupposes it, both show clear signs of influence by the philosopher’s stone. Empirical calibration proposes to improve upon the A-framework by replacing its concepts by successor concepts fixed from without by data given direct to the observer by the world. The concept empiricist appears to model their concept of <perceptual representation> quite directly on the philosopher’s stone: like the philosopher’s stone, the perceptual representation is a mongrel entity, functioning both as a conceptual episode of some sort (insofar as it enters into our thinking about the world), and as a non-conceptual episode.

78. In his discussion of the myth of the given, Sellars explicitly identifies “the classical concept of a sense datum,” favored by traditional empiricists, as “a mongrel resulting from the crossbreeding

⁷ See G.H. Fromm (2015, pp. 21-24). Given his familiarity with Marx’s criticisms of Ranke, it is odd that Fromm misreads the “dead facts” passage as a criticism of empiricism in general, rather than of objective historiography.

of two ideas”: the idea that there are concept-laden perceptual thought episodes which are “the non-inferential knowings that certain items are, for example, red or C#”; and the idea that there are non-conceptual inner episodes (i.e. sensations) that are causally responsible for bringing about these concept-laden perceptual episodes (W. Sellars 1991: §7).

We do not need to suppose, however, that Marx has a nascent version of Sellars’s argument in mind. As I have argued, Marx recognizes that the philosopher’s stone is unfruitful and misleading as an analogical model. This is enough to explain why he should avoid adopting methods that show obvious signs of influence by those models. Such considerations are no substitute for careful examination of the theories and methods themselves—but given the finite time and energy of the inquirer, it is rational, in many cases, to avoid theories and methods, just by rule of thumb, that show some definite likelihood of giving rise to representational error.

79. Suppose that Marx does in fact rule out the empirical calibration procedure on the grounds that it shows signs of having been given rise to by the philosopher’s stone. The philosopher’s stone tends to generate procedures that inadvertently generate conceptual accommodations (cf. §5.48). Thus, Marx will suppose that empirical calibrations itself enters into conceptual accommodation. In particular, Marx will be led to suppose that empirical calibration (i) treats certain concepts as fixed from without, and (ii) takes those concepts to be vouchsafed by contact with reality, and thus (iii) immune to further criticism; but that (iv) those concepts in fact do not have any special epistemic standing, and thus (v) their retention is arbitrary and dogmatic.

80. Empirical calibration in fact (i) treats certain concepts as fixed directly by empirical observation; it (ii) takes those concepts to be adequate just in virtue of their having been thus fixed;

and (iii) treats those concepts as immune to further criticism, insofar as they have been produced by passive attention to the world itself. It remains to be seen whether (iv) empirical calibration in fact fails to establish a special standing for the concepts it generates, with the result that (v) its candidate R-frameworks fall into conceptual accommodation.

Marx certainly writes as though he takes mere perception (i.e. without the contribution of reason) to involve conservatism of this sort. He likens Stirner's inadvertent conservatism, for instance, to "mere perception," insofar as it "leaves everything existing as it was" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 192). Likewise, as discussed earlier (cf. §2.53), Marx refers to the cognitive conservatism characteristic of Rational Explication as an "uncritical positivism" (1975a: 332). Though Marx uses the term "positivism" in a somewhat different sense than is common today, the claim still, on his usage, identifies the passively empirical approach to knowing as conservative.

81. Allow me to review: Marx does not provide an *a priori* argument against concept empiricism. He does not even provide arguments against individual concept empiricists. He does appear to reject concept empiricism, however, at every stage of his career. It follows that he cannot embrace the empirical calibration procedure of discovery. Marx's reasons for rejecting concept empiricism are ultimately unclear from his available writings. Nevertheless, by looking to his criticism of the philosopher's stone, in *The German Ideology*, we can see that he is epistemically well-positioned to give one particular argument against both concept empiricism and empirical calibration: he can reject them for showing clear signs of influence by the philosopher's stone.

This does not prove *a priori* that either is inadequate. It suggests, however, that both may involve conceptual accommodation. It provides *prima facie* reason to pursue other options. Notably, the absence of explicit argument in Marx is compatible with this reconstruction.

82. I have devoted considerable space in this chapter to reconstructing Marx's reasons for rejecting one possible alternative to his early procedure of discovery (i.e. explicative inference). I have done this, in part, because showing why Marx rejects more directly empirical solutions to the conservatism problem facing Rational Explication explains why he instead adopts the backward-looking genetic exculpation solution he finds in Feuerbach. This procedure of justification continues to play an important role in Marx's thinking to the end of his career.

83. More important for present purposes, perhaps, I have focused on Marx's criticism of empirical calibration because it is an especially convenient case study of the role played by Marx's rejection of the philosopher's stone in deciding which theories and methods he countenances, and which he does not. First, it is fairly obvious that Marx in fact rejects concept empiricism. Even Richard Hudelson, who is the most adamant empiricist reader of Marx in recent years, recognizes that Marx rejects "crude empiricism," on which knowledge is construed as "emerging directly, without the intervention of theory, out of a mass of observations" (Hudelson 1990: 119).

It is also fairly obvious how the philosopher's stone contributes to empirical calibration. More naïve forms of empiricism, even in their worked-out details, stand not far removed from the merely suggestive images of the prison of thought and the philosopher's stone. Additionally, I have been able to rely on an analogy to Sellars's criticism of sense-datum empiricism in terms of its reliance on the myth of the given to quickly motivate how Marx might have rejected empirical calibration for its reliance on the philosopher's stone. These three conveniences allow for a fairly straightforward application of Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone to a concrete case.

5.4. The Case against Necessity

84. None of the conveniences enumerated above are present in the case of Marx's rejection of the explicative inference procedure of discovery. It is not a matter of especially wide agreement that Marx in fact rejects his early method in 1845. It is the aim of this dissertation, in part, to make the case that he does. It is also far less clear, at first sight, what role the philosopher's stone—understood as an unfruitful model of human cognition—plays in shaping explicative inference.

It will be my aim, in this part of the chapter, to make plausible the idea that Marx comes to reject explicative inference, and therefore Genetico-Critical Explication as a whole, because he (i) recognizes that the philosopher's stone is an unfruitful model; (ii) recognizes explicative inference to be shaped by the philosopher's stone; and thus (iii) comes to see what he has previously overlooked: that Genetico-Critical Explication, specifically because it relies on explicative inference, fails to resolve the dilemma introduced by Marx's own Accommodation Argument.

85. As in the case of empirical calibration, Marx provides no explicit argument against explicative inference in *The German Ideology*. He especially does not provide an additional *a priori* argument along the lines of the Accommodation Argument. He does, however, make clear that he now rejects explicative inference. This represents a major change in his views on philosophical method.

I have already quoted, above (cf. §5.1), Marx's dismissive characterization of explicative inference as philosophers' procedure of "resolving the ready-made nonsense they find into some other freak, i.e., of presupposing that all this nonsense has a special sense which can be discovered" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 56). This passage, just by itself, makes clear that Marx no longer considers explicative inference to be redeemable when taken together with genetic exculpation.

86. Contrast this with Marx's earlier, optimistic characterization of explicative inference as a procedure by which the critic avoids dogmatism by "help[ing] the dogmatists to clarify their propositions for themselves" (1975a: 142) and "develop[ing] new principles for the world out of the world's own principles" (144), as well as with his promise, in the *1844 Manuscripts*, to develop his early anthropological R-framework by "analysing [i.e., explicating] merely a fact of political economy" (278): an empirical commitment of the political economists' A-framework. Thus, Marx transitions, by the time he writes *The German Ideology*, from explicitly celebrating and endorsing explicative inference to explicitly treating it as a misguided and dogmatic procedure.

87. We are not limited to just one passage. Marx adopts the same disparaging tone anytime he discusses explicative inference in *The German Ideology*. In particular, he mocks Stirner for continuing to rely on the procedure. Thus, he writes that Stirner "still continues to strive for the famous Hegelian 'premiseless thinking,' i.e., thinking without dogmatic premises, which in Hegel too is only a pious wish" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 434). Marx elsewhere refers to concepts arrived at by explicative inference as having been "constructed on the Hegelian method" (192), and claims that it "has already been thoroughly enough proved by Hegel" that "such concepts, if they are divorced from the empirical reality underlying them, can be turned inside-out like a glove" (326).

Marx claims, however, that Hegel's "use of this method, as against the abstract ideologists, [is] justified" (326), presumably because Rational Explication does provisionally resolve the conservatism problems facing Naïve Analysis (cf. §1.56). That Marx takes the procedure to be less justified in the hands of the "abstract ideologists"—meaning Bauer, Stirner, *et al.*—reinforces the point that he no longer understands explicative inference as a viable procedure of discovery.

88. Marx's rejection of explicative inference comes to a head in his criticism of Stirner. After diagnosing Stirner with conceptual accommodation—criticizing his “gigantic faith” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 171)—Marx goes on to identify explicative inference as the element responsible for producing this conservative outcome. More exactly, he claims that, if Stirner hopes to carry out a successful “dissolution” of the errors of past critics, he “should at least [go] as far as the dissolution of dissolution” (259). Marx's suggestion is that explicative inference is itself inadequate, and must be replaced by a new procedure, more adequate to the work of improving upon our concepts.

89. Thus, Marx makes his rejection of explicative inference quite clear. I have suggested that this rejection is justified, already, by Marx's Accommodation Argument. Following Feuerbach, Marx understands the conservatism problem faced by Rational Explication to involve it having no procedure for picking out representational error (cf. §2.45). He introduces genetic exculpation as a check, to ensure that R-frameworks produced by Genetico-Critical Explication improve upon the representational adequacy of their A-framework predecessors. I tried to bring out the sense in this proposal in Ch. 3 (cf. §3.58). There is a problem, however.

90. On Rational Explication, A-frameworks are partially retained by the R-frameworks that succeed them. That is, some of the principles constitutive of the concepts in the A-framework are retained on the R-framework. The explicative inference procedure of discovery ensures that this is so, by retaining core contents across explications. This retention of core contents establishes discursive continuity between frameworks, thus securing a response to the Continuity Problem. On Rational Explication, however, the R-framework is also treated as the true form of the A-framework (i.e. it is taken principally to vindicate what it retains from the A-framework).

91. On Genetico-Critical Explication too, A-frameworks are partially retained by the R-frameworks that succeed them. Because Genetico-Critical Explication retains the explicative inference procedure of discovery, it also retains the preservation of core contents across explications, and the discursive-continuity-based solution to the Continuity Problem. Because Genetico-Critical Explication adopts the genetic exculpation procedure of justification, however, its presentation of this relationship differs from that on Rational Explication. In particular, the R-framework is here taken principally to debunk (the principles it abandons from) the A-framework.

92. It should be clear, on this framing, that the difference between the roles played by explicative inference on these two methods (and by the discursive continuity it establishes) is only a difference in emphasis. On both methods, some portion of the A-framework is retained, and some portion is discarded. Since explicative inference is a necessary mode of inference, there is one and only one R-framework derivable from each A-framework. If we start with a given framework F, it does not matter whether we adopt Rational Explication or Genetico-Critical Explication: in either case, the same successor framework, F', follows by explicative inference.

It is true, of course, that the practitioner of Genetico-Critical Explication follows up by checking whether F' improves upon the representational adequacy of F (i.e. by explaining F away as responsive to misleading appearances), while the practitioner of Rational Explication follows up only by (redundantly) confirming that F' improves upon the logical and semantical consistency of F. It is hard to say, however, what the practitioner of Genetico-Critical Explication will do in cases where F' does not improve upon the representational adequacy of its predecessor (i.e. where

it fails the genetic exculpation test), since F' is the only R-framework derivable by explicative inference from F. Perhaps they will throw their hands up and admit that F cannot be explicated.

93. Thus, though Genetico-Critical Explication in fact improves upon Rational Explication by introducing a criterion for determining whether an R-framework improves upon its A-framework, Feuerbach and Marx are wrong to suppose that it is any less conservative, in practice, than Rational Explication. Marx's introduction of the genetic exculpation procedure of justification fails to split the horns of the dilemma raised by the Accommodation Argument. It follows that his endorsement of Genetico-Critical Explication is (strictly speaking) a misstep.

Why, though, does Marx not recognize this mistake earlier? Following the strategy pursued in the previous part of this chapter, I will argue that it is because, in years prior to 1845, Marx is under the influence of a misleading analogical model. In particular, I will argue that explicative inference, and the methods that depend upon it, are shaped by the philosopher's stone. It is more difficult to identify the role the philosopher's stone plays in explicative inference than it is to identify the role it plays in empirical calibration. Making the point will require some stage setting.

94. Both Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication are perennial methods in philosophy (cf. §1.34). This means that both methods take the truth to be available to us, in principle, from the start of inquiry. It also means that both methods purport to establish that R-framework answers to A-framework questions are strongly topic-preserving. Both claim that, between any A-framework and its corresponding R-framework, there is one, finite, performable series of necessary (i.e. explicative) inferences that describes the transition between the two.

Applied transitively, this means that, between any A-framework and its maximally adequate R-framework (i.e. the corresponding final framework), there is likewise one, finite, performable series of necessary inferences that describes the transition between the two. This, in turn, explains the sense in which A-framework concepts and their R-framework successors are about the same thing: A-framework concepts already contain their final-framework successors, and can be understood as progressively more adequate approximations to those final concepts.

95. It follows that, if we accept explicative inference as our procedure of discovery, we must maintain, in line with Marx's basic statement of the powers of Genetico-Critical Explication (cf. §3.8), that "[t]he critic can ... start out from any form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from the forms *peculiar* to existing reality develop the true reality as its obligation and its final goal" (Marx and Engels 1975a: 143). Every A-framework contains its final framework as a necessary consequence; or, rather, every A-framework just is its final framework *in potentia*.

96. This has the following implication: having taken up any framework at all, we are then also already in possession of the corresponding final framework. It just needs working out. This is true even of the very first A-framework we (i.e. human individuals) take up, whatever that may be. Call this the "initial framework." How do we arrive at the initial framework? It is simply given to us, in the mundane sense that individual inquirers begin with whatever A-framework they are trained into. This holds also for the community of inquirers as a whole. If we hold strictly to discursive continuity, then whatever A-framework is first accepted, in human prehistory, already contains the maximally adequate R-framework (i.e. the end goal of all science) as a necessary consequence.

As Marx will present it on his mature anthropological R-framework, “[c]onsciousness is at first [i.e., on the initial framework] ... merely consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious” (1975c: 44). In both cases, therefore, what initial framework is given to us depends on arbitrary factors in our local situation (e.g. the makeup of our physical environment, or the cultural milieu into which we are born).

97. Despite these arbitrary factors, the final framework falls out of our initial framework by necessity. It follows that, in a single event, the initial framework is given to us in the mundane sense that we simply happen to be trained into it, and the final framework is given to us in the extra-mundane (i.e. mythical) sense that it is imposed upon us, from without, as a piece of certainty. Certain vestiges of the initial framework—despite its arbitrary provenance—will be retained across explications as core contents, and these too are now guaranteed admission to the final framework. We can and must revise our A-framework concepts in order to arrive at the final framework, but we cannot, short of deliberate irrationality, avoid arriving at that one final framework contained already in the A-framework. This is the sense in which explicative inference, and thus Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, involves the philosopher’s stone.

98. To the extent that it is representationally inadequate, the initial framework belongs to the realm of opinion. To the extent that it contains the final framework as necessary consequence, it belongs also to the realm of truth. In this sense, the initial framework is a mongrel entity of the sort Marx identifies in Stirner (cf. §5.40). It also serves as the key point of access to knowledge.

Thus, the initial framework, understood to contain the final framework as necessary consequence, is the philosopher's stone. In his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel uses the term "philosopher's stone"—without Marx's negative connotation—to describe exactly this phenomenon. Hegel writes that "the philosopher's stone lies hidden ... *within nature itself*," and that it is the "*actual* reason present within it [i.e., the R-framework] which knowledge must investigate and grasp conceptually—not the shapes and contingencies which are visible on the surface [i.e., the A-framework]" (Hegel 1991a: 12; and cf. Magee 2008: 263). Marx almost certainly has this passage in mind when he introduces the term "philosopher's stone."

Thus, there is a sense in which explicative inference involves not just an instance of the philosopher's stone, but the paradigmatic instance on which Marx bases his choice of the term.

99. Because explicative inference treats R-frameworks (and thus the final framework) as falling out of A-frameworks (and thus the initial framework) by necessity, it involves the philosopher's stone. After his 1845 criticism of the philosopher's stone as unfruitful and misleading, Marx is well-positioned to recognize the role it plays in shaping the explicative inference procedure. There is no biographical evidence that this is in fact the course he takes. There is direct textual evidence, however, that he abandons explicative inference as dogmatic, and that he rejects the philosopher's stone as giving rise to dogmatism of just this kind. He is in position, therefore, to pursue this line.

100. Suppose that Marx in fact rules out explicative inference because it is shaped by the philosopher's stone. This will lead him to suppose that explicative inference (i) treats certain concepts as fixed from without, and (ii) takes those concepts to be vouchsafed by contact with

reality, and thus (iii) immune to criticism; but that (iv) those concepts in fact do not have any special epistemic standing, and thus (v) their retention is arbitrary and dogmatic.

Explicative inference in fact (i) treats the concepts of the final framework as fixed, insofar as they follow by necessity from the initial framework; it (ii) takes those concepts to be adequate by definition, since they belong to the final framework; and (iii) it treats those concepts as immune to further criticism, again by definition, since they constitute the end-point of criticism. Moreover, Marx suggests, by his many criticism of Stirner, that (iv) explicative inference fails to establish a special standing for the concepts it generates, with the results that (v) its candidate R-frameworks embody conceptual accommodations. This is just the pattern of argument we would expect if Marx's reasons for rejecting explicative inference turned on its involving the philosopher's stone.

101. As I reconstruct his thinking, Marx's awareness of the misleading and unfruitful character of the philosopher's stone allows him to recognize that Genetico-Critical Explication, no less than Rational Explication, involves systematic conceptual accommodation. On its maximally general formulation, Marx's Accommodation Argument already shows this. It follows that the genetic exculpation solution proposed by Genetico-Critical Explication is not enough to resolve the excessive conservatism of Rational Explication, as this owes to the latter's procedure of discovery (which is retained on Genetico-Critical Explication) rather than to its procedure of justification.

My proposal is that Marx overlooks this fact—influenced, as he is, by Feuerbach, who also overlooks it. Having recognized the philosopher's stone as unfruitful, however, Marx positions himself to recognize that explicative inference is the common element responsible for the excessive conservatism of both Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication. He can then further conclude that no method relying on explicative inference will hold up to criticism.

102. This conclusion is only probable, not certain. The argumentative strategy I reconstruct here is a naturalistic one. It does not provide Marx with a new *a priori*, knockdown argument against explicative inference. Neither does he need one, however. In its maximally general form, the Accommodation Argument already does this work. Moreover, in his mature work, Marx is less interested in aprioristic patterns of argument. Thus, he sets explicative inference aside as probably unfruitful (i.e. as giving rise to conceptual accommodation), and goes on to devise a new procedure of discovery, taking it as a desideratum that it eschew contact with the philosopher's stone.

I have argued that Marx's criticism of analogical models in *The German Ideology* puts him in position to move beyond his early dependence on explicative inference, and thus motivates him to reject his early method for philosophy. I will proceed, in the next chapter, to discuss Marx's mature method, by which proposes to replace Genetico-Critical Explication. I will conclude this chapter with two brief notes on the broader implications of this shift in Marx's thinking.

103. First, by abandoning explicative inference, Marx also abandons discursive continuity. This means that he also abandons the perennial method in philosophy (i.e. the claim that philosophical understanding is available to us in principle from the start of inquiry). It is precisely the perennial character of Genetico-Critical Explication—the fact that final frameworks are present already in initial frameworks—that shows signs of inspiration by the philosopher's stone. Marx's rejection of the philosopher's stone, therefore, amounts to wholesale rejection of the perennial method.

The perennial method construes philosophy as the clarification of ideas, where it is just these ideas, present already in the initial framework, that will survive the process of criticism and appear in perfect clarity on the final framework. The perennial method cannot countenance our

fully abandoning these ideas in favor of others. In this way, all variations on the perennial method will involve appeal to the philosopher's stone, and thus (presumably) give rise to accommodation. To adopt a rule of thumb on which theories or methods given rise to by the philosopher's stone are to be avoided just is to have done with the idea of philosophy as an exercise in conceptual elucidation.

104. Second, as I claimed in an earlier chapter (cf. §3.23), contrary to the claims of many of his readers, Marx does not retain a method of “immanent” or “internal” criticism into his mature period. He in fact abandons explicative inference, which the source of the immanent character of his early arguments. The reconstructive or speculative component of this chapter has concerned Marx's reasons for abandoning explicative inference. Because it is speculative, it is vulnerable to criticism on the grounds that it goes beyond Marx's explicit remarks. By contrast, that Marx rejects explicative inference in *The German Ideology* is certain—as evidenced above (cf. §§5.85-88). Immanent criticism does not, and cannot, play a role on Marx's mature method for philosophy.

Chapter 6 – Marx’s Mature Method: Exculpatory Naturalism

1. In this chapter, I will introduce Marx’s mature method for philosophy, which I call “Exculpatory Naturalism.” Marx advertises this new approach to philosophy alongside a new approach to history, often referred to as “the materialist conception of history” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 31).

As I will make clear, Exculpatory Naturalism just is the materialist conception of history applied to the special domain of philosophy. Arriving at a clear formulation of this conclusion, however, will require a good deal of preliminary discussion. Marx’s readers often confuse his second-order concerns with his first-order concerns. In this chapter and the next, I will argue that this confusion owes to these readers’ failure to take stock of Marx’s epistemological background.

2. Exculpatory Naturalism retains Genetico-Critical Explication’s genetic-exculpation-based procedure of justification, and thus sets out to explain the errors of past frameworks away as illusions given rise to by objectively misleading appearances. Exculpatory Naturalism differs from Genetico-Critical Explication, however, in that it abandons the explicative-inference-based procedure of discovery, held over on Marx’s early method from Rational Explication.

Marx makes this change to secure against the excessive conservatism he identifies first, by his Accommodation Argument, in Rational Explication (cf. §2.55), and then later, by his criticism of the philosopher’s stone, in his own Genetico-Critical Explication method (cf. §5.101).

3. Exculpatory Naturalism is a naturalism. More exactly, it is characterized by a cluster of naturalistic features. First, like Genetico-Critical Explication, it draws upon explanatory strategies from the natural sciences to explain A-frameworks away as illusions, with the result that “every profound philosophical question is resolved ... into an empirical fact” (Marx and Engels 1975c:

39). Rather than treat aporias and confusions in received frameworks as philosophical problems requiring extended reflection from the armchair, Marx proposes to treat them as deficiencies, requiring explanation from the perspective of a more descriptively adequate successor framework.

Second, Exculpatory Naturalism abandons the aprioristic style of many traditional methods in philosophy. It proposes that we select candidate R-frameworks directly in terms of explanatory merit, rather than by deriving them from less adequate A-frameworks. I will discuss Marx's proposed replacement for the explicative inference procedure of discovery in the first part of the chapter. This new procedure likewise resembles procedures of discovery in the natural sciences.

4. In this chapter, I will restrict my discussion, as much as possible, to Marx's second-order, methodological concerns in *The German Ideology*. In the next chapter, I will turn to his first-order deployment of Exculpatory Naturalism: his first-order theory of history, which I understand as a revision upon his earlier ethnological productionism (cf. §4.22), his theory of ideology, his criticism of philosophical idealism, and his criticism of his own earlier concept of <man>. These are, of course, the primary topics of *The German Ideology*. Like the *1844 Manuscripts*, however, *The German Ideology* is an unfinished and unpublished manuscript. It is not as nebulous in its structure as the *1844 Manuscripts*, but it nevertheless requires non-trivial reconstruction. The methodological reflections in this chapter set the stage for the detailed reconstruction of the next.

5. The structure of my discussion here will mirror the structure of my discussion of Genetico-Critical Explication in Ch. 3. In the first part of the chapter, I will introduce the new procedure of discovery by which Marx proposes to replace explicative inference. In particular, I will argue that Marx's mature method employs an alternative, ampliative, but non-necessary mode of inference.

In the second part of the chapter, I will examine the role played by genetic exculpation on Exculpatory Naturalism, and discuss the method's solution to the Continuity Problem (i.e. the problem how answers framed in the vocabulary of the R-framework can intelligibly respond to questions framed in the vocabulary of the A-framework). This will resolve the question, raised in connection with Lenin (cf. §3.20), whether Marx's mature R-framework can promise to "furnish[] answers to the questions already raised by the foremost minds of mankind" and thus stand as a "legitimate successor to the best that man produced in the nineteenth century" (Lenin 1963: 23).

6. In the third part of the chapter, I will turn to the question how Exculpatory Naturalism proposes to avoid the excessive conservatism (and in particular conceptual accommodation) Marx diagnoses, in previous methods, by his Accommodation Argument and his criticism of the philosopher's stone. I will also address the heuristic role that earlier ideas still play in shaping candidate R-frameworks on Exculpatory Naturalism. In the fourth and final part, I will return to my claim that Exculpatory Naturalism just is the material approach to history applied to the special subject matter of philosophy. This discussion will also give me opportunity to illustrate the precise sense in which Exculpatory Naturalism is a naturalism: it naturalizes the history of philosophy, and it establishes continuity of method between philosophy and the natural sciences.

6.1. Procedure of Discovery: Abductive Inference

7. On Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, there are two moments involved in the procedure of discovery: the negative, or debunking moment, in which we identify logical or semantical inconsistencies in the A-framework through strict analysis; and the positive, or vindicating moment, in which we draw our candidate R-framework out of the A-framework by

explicative inference, resolving those inconsistencies. These two moments have a certain unity. We arrive at this definite R-framework by explicative inference only because we have identified these definite inconsistencies through strict analysis. Thus, on Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, the positive moment emerges as a necessary consequence of the negative.

8. This is not so on Exculpatory Naturalism. As I argued in the previous chapter, Exculpatory Naturalism abandons explicative inference as its procedure of discovery. With this, it abandons any necessary relation between the negative and positive moments of criticism. That is, on Marx's mature method, identifying the errors in the A-framework and producing an R-framework to correct those errors are two distinct acts. The one does not follow as a matter of course from the other. It follows that Exculpatory Naturalism's procedure of discovery in fact consists of two separate procedures: a procedure for discovering problems; and another for discovering solutions.

Nevertheless, I will argue that there is a certain unity, on Exculpatory Naturalism, between the negative and positive moments of the procedure of discovery: a different, weaker unity.

9. First, allow me to observe that the Marx of *The German Ideology* still treats the conceptual framework, and not the individual concept, as his basic unit of analysis. Thus, he proposes to address "[m]orality, religion, metaphysics," and so on in terms of the "forms of consciousness corresponding to these" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 36; and cf. 154). He retains this approach from both Rational Explication (§1.59) and Genetico-Critical Explication (§3.12). In *The German Ideology*, however, Marx also develops a linguistic interpretation of the idea that all description presupposes a framework. He writes, for instance, that "[f]or the bourgeois it is all the easier to prove on the basis of his language the identity of commercial and individual, or even universal,

human relations, as this language itself is a product of the bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 231). This turns on Marx’s view that “[l]anguage is the immediate actuality of thought” (336).

Marx also retains, on Exculpatory Naturalism, the special focus on the adequacy and inadequacy of questions (rather than answers) that characterizes Genetico-Critical Explication (cf. §3.15). He writes of an inadequate A-framework, for instance, that “[n]ot only in its answers, even in its questions there [is] a mystification” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 28). These holdovers suggest that he also retains his earlier conceptual holism (cf. §§1.58, 3.14). Thus, he holds that concepts have their context fixed by the relations they stand in to every other concept in their framework.¹

¹ My concept of <framework> should be distinguished from Althusser’s concept of <problematic>, which he derives from Jacques Martin (2020). There are clear similarities between the two notions. Althusser holds that “[e]very ideology must be regarded as a real whole, internally unified by its own *problematic*, so that it is impossible to extract one element without altering its meaning” (Althusser 1969c: 62). Thus, he understands the problematic as the unity that distinguishes one system of concepts from another. Althusser proposes to distinguish systems of concepts not just by their logical and semantical relations to one another, however, but also by their external relations to facts and events in the world. He claims that “it is not *the interiority of the problematic* which constitutes its essence but its relation to real problems: *the problematic of an ideology* cannot be demonstrated without *relating* and *submitting* it to the real problems to which its deformed enunciation gives a false answer” (67 fn 30). Thus, Althusser distinguishes his notion of <problematic> from what he refers to as “subjectivist concepts of an idealist interpretation of the development of ideologies” (67 fn 30), which distinguish systems of concepts just by their internal relations to one another. My concept of <framework>, though not idealist, falls under the latter rubric.

Ultimately, Althusser wants to understand the content of our concepts in terms of the practical context out of which they arise. I share this ambition, and will discuss my interpretation of Marx’s practical approach to concept adequacy later in this chapter. I hold, however, that Althusser proceeds too quickly. By inviting practical, real-world determinants into the very definitions of our concepts, he does not (as he supposes) secure against idealism, but rather stumbles backward into idealism—for only other concepts, or things having conceptual form, can figure in the definitions of concepts; thus, to say that real world facts or events play a role in defining our concepts just is to reduce those real-world facts or events to conceptual entities (i.e. to the concepts that describe them). Althusser’s claim that our concepts are defined, in part, by their relation to real-world facts and events, therefore, just amounts to the claim that our concepts are defined, in part, by their relation to the concepts that describe those facts and events. Thus, the concept of <problematic> improves upon the concept of <framework> not at all, while also introducing a host of auxiliary confusions concerning what it means for something to be a material or non-conceptual determinant.

Incidentally, the picture Althusser arrives at through his introduction of the concept <problematic> is not unlike the picture one finds in the writings of the idealist Ernst Cassirer, under the heading of the “teleological character of verbal concepts” (Cassirer 1953: 39). Thus, Cassirer writes that conceptual distinctions “are guided, not by any ‘objective’ similarity among things, but by their appearance through the medium of practice, which relates them within a purposive nexus” (39). He adds that “[i]f altered conditions of life, the changes that attend the advance of culture, have brought men into a new practical relation with their environment, the concepts inherent in language do not retain their original ‘sense,’” but rather “begin to shift, to move about, in the same measure as the bounds of human activity tend to vary and efface each other” (39). Cassirer makes clear that the only way to make sense of the bearing of material or practical determinants on concept meaning is to construe these determinants in terms of their role in the intentional, telic activity of human actors (i.e. in terms of conceptually defined intentions).

10. Strict analysis still plays a role on Exculpatory Naturalism. In the course of his criticism of Stirner, Marx enumerates the kinds of error that he will address. Among these, he includes the class of errors targeted by strict analysis: “carelessness of thought,” “confusion,” “incoherence,” and “contradiction with [one]self” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 272). In the course of *The German Ideology*, Marx identifies a number of logical and semantical inconsistencies in rival frameworks.

Stirner claims, for instance, that market competition is a consequence of the failure of individuals to “come to an *understanding*,” based on their common needs, and (say) “set up a public bakery” (Stirner 2017: 287). Here, competition is represented as a social ill—though one that can be overcome by selfishly motivated individuals so long as they recognize the potential for mutual gain. Elsewhere, however, Stirner writes that “[p]eople introduced competition because they saw it as *well-being for all*” (Stirner 2012: 79). Marx points out that Stirner’s earlier characterization “contradicts his further exposition of competition” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 372).

11. Increasingly, Marx is drawn to criticize not just particular inconsistencies in rival A-frameworks, but a whole class of broader “offences against *formal logic*” (482), by which he understands “the theory of propositions” (287). This tendency in Exculpatory Naturalism likely owes in part, again, to the influence of the proto-positivist Otto Friedrich Gruppe (cf. §§3.26, 4.7).

An example: Marx criticizes Stirner for cheating out conclusions by “exploit[ing] negation sometimes in one meaning and sometimes in another” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 280). Stirner argues, for instance, that the individual ego is fundamentally at odds with the collective. As Marx reconstructs Stirner’s argument, it takes the following form: I am not the collective; thus, the collective is the non-I; moreover, I am the non-collective; thus, “I am the negation of the people,” and the people “is the negation of my ego” (279). Marx dismisses this as nonsense on the grounds

that “the negation which at the outset belonged to the copula is attached first to the subject and then to the predicate,” and “the negation, the ‘not’, is, according to convenience, regarded as an expression of dissimilarity, difference, antithesis or direct dissolution,” such that “the tautological proposition that I am not the people is transformed into [a] tremendous new discovery” (279).

12. It is important to note that, while Marx still attends to logical errors on Exculpatory Naturalism—both inconsistencies of the sort diagnosed by Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, and this broader class of logical errors—he no longer requires that we identify a logical error in the A-framework to identify it as inadequate. Marx now recognizes the possibility that a framework may be (or at least appear) wholly consistent, while nevertheless counting as inadequate. He writes of the so-called “True Socialists,” for instance, that “[w]ith perfect consistency they transform the relations of . . . particular individuals into relations of ‘Man,’” (482). Marx rejects the A-framework favored by the True Socialists, but admits its consistency. The issue he takes with the framework must fall, therefore, under one of the other kinds of error he lists.

13. Among these other kinds of error, Marx also includes the “crude abuse of the conjunctions for, therefore, for that reason,” and “because” (272). Marx’s proposal, here, is to criticize bad explanations specifically for their inadequacy as explanations. In many instances, recognizing an explanation as bad requires having our own R-framework in view: we know an explanation of a given phenomenon to be bad when it contradicts (or fails of consilience with) what we take to be correct explanations articulable from the perspective of our candidate R-framework. Thus, Marx criticizes his rivals’ explanations for presupposing inadequate frameworks (cf. 233, 265). There are some framework-invariant or formal indicators of bad explanations, however, such as failure

to specify any definite *explanans* in an explanation (cf. 482), or failure to specify how the *explanans* in a given explanation relates to its intended *explanandum* (cf. 104).

14. Marx also lists, among his targets, “dependence on Hegelian traditions and current Berlin phrases” (272). His suggestion is that excessive conservatism with respect to received ideas, whether these be philosophical (e.g. “Hegelian traditions”) or popular (e.g. “current Berlin phrases”) suggests error. The retention of old ideas, however, is no sin by itself. The retention of concepts amounts to conceptual accommodation only in case the concepts retained fail of criticism. Marx will suspect rival A-frameworks of excessive conservatism in at least two cases: (i) when those frameworks are generated by procedures, like explicative inference, with an *a priori* tendency to conceptual accommodation; and (ii) when they are generated with the help of analogical models, like the philosopher’s stone, that tend on average to give rise to conceptual accommodation. Claims of the latter sort, at least, are uncertain, and require further investigation.

15. Finally, Marx mentions his intent to criticize rival philosophers’ “attempts to intimidate the reader” (272). In particular, he criticizes these philosophers both for (i) relying too much on name-dropping and displays of erudition, which afford their bad ideas an undeserved plausibility, and (ii) relying too much on obscure formulations and technical jargon, to disguise the inadequacy of their ideas. Marx devotes a great deal of space, in *The German Ideology*, to mocking his rivals for their “pompous language” (299) and “obscure passages” (497, 538), and to translating their views into “plain language” (124, 200; and cf. 245, 447, 464), in order that they can be criticized. Thus, Marx holds that excessive jargon and obscurity are tools used to insulate inadequate A-frameworks

from criticism: if we cannot pin down the exact principles that shape a framework, then we are prevented from pointing out its errors. Obscurity of presentation, it follows, is an error just in itself.

16. In its negative moment, then, Exculpatory Naturalism tracks the following sorts of error: logical and semantical inconsistencies, such as emerge on strict analysis; more general abuses of logic; bad explanations; excessive conservatism with respect to received ideas; and obscurity of presentation. Avoidance of these errors serves as a negative criterion for the positive employment of Marx's method. Whatever procedure of discovery Exculpatory Naturalism employs, therefore, it must be such as to produce candidate R-frameworks that reliably (i.e. usually) avoid such errors.

17. Marx's frequent appeals to the language of "verification" and "empirical confirmation" might suggest that he intends to defend a procedure of discovery along the lines of empirical calibration (cf. §5.52). He writes, for instance, that the "premises" of R-frameworks produced on Exculpatory Naturalism can be "verified in a purely empirical way" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 31), and that the method "empirically observes the actual material premises" (236). I have already argued, however, that Marx cannot endorse any procedure of this sort (cf. §5.81). I will argue that Marx's talk about verification corresponds (perhaps unsurprisingly) not to the procedure of discovery, but to the procedure of justification. We verify our premises directly only once the R-framework is in hand.

18. Like both Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication, Exculpatory Naturalism takes the process of discovery to begin by presupposing some existing A-framework. Unlike these other methods, however, Exculpatory Naturalism does not propose to derive its candidate R-framework from this A-framework by necessary inference. Instead, having established the

inadequacy of the A-framework by attention to the kinds of error enumerated above, Marx proposes that we turn immediately to the question “how ... it come[s] about that people ‘g[e]t’ these illusions ‘into their heads’” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 236). This is the “puzzle” about inadequate A-frameworks that Marx takes up with his genetic exculpation procedure (cf. §3.36).

Thus, Marx suggests that, on Exculpatory Naturalism, R-frameworks arise not as candidate explications of the A-frameworks that precede them (which we then put, as though by accident, to the task of explaining those A-frameworks away), but rather directly as explanations. That is, he suggests that we arrive at candidate R-frameworks directly in the course of explaining away the errors of past A-frameworks. This is what he means when he writes that, on the correct method, philosophy does not enjoin “resolving the ready-made nonsense ... into some other freak” through explication, but just “explaining these theoretical phrases from the actual existing relations” (56).

19. Marx’s idea is that the A-framework describes a set of appearances, and what we seek, in our candidate R-framework, is an account of the reality that underlies and explains those appearances. His new procedure of discovery, therefore, must be such as to pick out underlying realities.

20. Marx is fairly tight-lipped about the details of his new procedure. He claims, however, that with Exculpatory Naturalism, we turn away from *a priori* “speculation,” and toward “real, positive science” (37). In particular, we turn away from the class of concepts favored by the philosophical tradition, and toward a new class of concepts “abstracted from the contemplation of the historical development of men” (37; translation modified).² There are two key elements involved here.

² The MECW has Marx claim that these concepts are “abstractions which are derived from the observation of the historical development of men” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 37). The MEGA reads as follows: “An ihre Stelle kann höchstens eine Zusammenfassung der allgemeinsten Resultate treten, die sich aus der Betrachtung der historischen Entwicklung der Menschen abstrahieren lassen” (1970: 16). I have made two changes. First, I have

First, we begin by contemplating our subject matter, as described by existing A-frameworks. In this case, Marx is discussing “the historical development of men.” We then move by abstraction to a new framework. Marx fails to clarify just what he means by “abstraction.” This claim would not stand out in the way that it does were it not for the fact that Marx returns to the topic of abstraction much later, in the preface to the first German edition of *Capital*. There, he claims that “[i]n the analysis of economic forms, . . . neither microscopes nor chemical reagents are of use,” and that “[t]he force of abstraction must replace both” (Marx 1996: 8). Marx’s suggestion is that the operation he calls “abstraction” is essential not just to philosophy but to social science.

21. There is a plausible indicator of Marx’s meaning in Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Hegel holds that every epoch in human history is underwritten by a single principle, representing the progress of human rationality to that point. As Hegel puts it, “[e]ach historical principle, in its concrete form, expresses every aspect of the nation’s consciousness and will, and indeed of its entire reality; it is the common denominator of its religion, its political constitution, its ethical life, its system of justice, its customs, its learning, art, and technical skill, and the whole direction of its industry” (Hegel 1975: 138). Such principles underlie the multitude of appearances.

Hegel introduces the procedure of abstraction in a discussion of the epistemic situation of the historian, who sets out to identify the principle that unifies and explains an entire epoch. He

translated “Betrachtung” not as “observation,” but as “contemplation.” The MECW’s choice creates the false impression that Marx is here advocating for a naïve (i.e. non-discursive) empiricism. I have chosen “contemplation” because it retains “Betrachtung”’s passivity—we contemplate only what is given to us—but avoids the suggestion of immediacy. This allows us to disambiguate “Betrachtung” from both “Beobachtung” and “Anschauung.”

Second, on the MECW translation, the German verb “abstrahieren,” which translates most naturally to the verb “abstract,” is transformed into the substantive “abstraction.” This distracts from the fact that Marx is here identifying the correct *procedure* for arriving at concepts. The result is an abstraction, but the procedure itself stands apart. This is just the familiar distinction between act and object. Interestingly, one suspects the MECW translators choose to have “derived” (rather than “abstracted”) do the work of “abstrahieren” in order to avoid association with the so-called “abstractionism” of the naïve empiricists. As I will soon show, however, misconceptions about Marx’s talk of abstraction can be cleared up by appeal to his own later discussions of the procedure (e.g. in *Capital*, Vol. 1).

writes that “[t]he question of whether this or that particular characteristic actually constitutes the distinctive principle of a nation is one which can only be approached empirically,” and which relies on both “a trained capacity for abstraction,” and a “thorough familiarity with ideas” (138).

22. As I will argue in the next chapter, Marx rejects Hegel’s theory of history, and its attempt to explain all of culture in terms of underlying rational principles. He claims that his own approach to history “has not, like the idealist view of history, to look for a category [i.e., principle] in every period, but remains constantly on the real *ground* of history” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 53-54).

Nevertheless, Marx does retain from Hegel the idea that we arrive at candidate R-frameworks by first considering the empirical data from the perspective of some A-framework, then moving by a “trained capacity for abstraction” (or “the force of abstraction”) to a replacement R-framework. I propose to reconstruct the operation that Marx and Hegel refer to as “abstraction” as a distinctive non-deductive, non-necessary mode of inference—as abductive inference.

23. Abductive inference can be understood in at least two ways. The term “abduction” owes originally to C. S. Peirce, who writes that “[a]bduction is the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis,” and that “[i]t is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea” (Peirce 1934: 5.172). On this approach, abductive inference is a procedure by which inquirers arrive at new R-frameworks (i.e. a procedure of discovery). Peirce characterizes abduction as a special imaginative capacity for getting things right by guesswork—in particular, for guessing the underlying causes of phenomena that fall afoul of received understanding. Thus, he describes abductive inference as an inborn human “faculty of divining the ways of Nature,” adding that this faculty “resembl[es] the instincts of the animals,” especially in its “small liability to error” (5.173).

On the alternative approach, abductive inference is a procedure for establishing the truth or reasonability of a proposed framework (i.e. a procedure of justification). Thus, Gilbert Harman writes that, by abductive inference, “one infers, from the premise that a given hypothesis would provide a ‘better’ explanation for the evidence than would any other hypothesis, to the conclusion that the given hypothesis is true” (Harman 1965: 89). This is how most contemporary philosophers construe abductive inference, which they often refer to as “inference to the best explanation.”

24. I will further disambiguate the two senses of abductive inference by reference to an example given by Peirce. He recounts a story from his travels, which follows:

I once landed at a seaport in a Turkish province; and, as I was walking up to the house which I was to visit, I met a man upon horseback, surrounded by four horsemen holding a canopy over his head. As the governor of the province was the only personage I could think of who would be so greatly honored, I inferred that this was he (Peirce 1932: 2.624).

Abduction plays a different role in this example depending on whether we construe it as a procedure of discovery, or as a procedure of justification *a la* inference to the best explanation.

Understood as a procedure discovery, abduction is the operation by which Peirce arrives at his likely hypothesis (i.e. that this man is the governor). He does not find the idea in the newspaper, nor take it on the testimony of a fellow traveler, but plucks it from thin air, so to speak, by an exercise in abduction. Peirce’s previous knowledge of the Turkish municipal structure clearly plays a guiding role in this—but the hypothesis itself emerges just by way of abduction. The question of justification, on this approach, remains to be settled. By contrast, treated as inference to the best explanation, abduction here functions to justify Peirce’s supposition about the man on the horse: because it is likelier that he is the governor than that he is anyone else, the conclusion is sound. This approach, in turn, leaves the question how the hypothesis itself emerges unsettled.

25. Some philosophers have argued that there is little or no connection between abduction, treated as a procedure of discovery, and inference to the best explanation (cf. Mcauliffe 2015). Others have argued that Peirce himself fails to consistently distinguish the two (cf. Frankfurt 1958). For my purposes, it is important only that we maintain the distinction for Exculpatory Naturalism.

I hold that, when Marx proposes that we arrive at improved theories by “abstract[ing] from the contemplation of the historical development of men” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 37), he means that we should (i) study the empirical world as presented on a received A-framework; (ii) identify the inadequacies of this A-framework; and (iii) move, by abduction, to a new descriptive vocabulary (i.e. a candidate R-framework) which explains both the empirical phenomena themselves, and the genesis of prior A-frameworks. Abductive inference functions in Exculpatory Naturalism, therefore, as a procedure of discovery: we arrive at candidate R-frameworks not by revealing the true meaning of prior frameworks through explication, but by directly abducting them.

26. The sociologist Derek Sayer has argued that Marx employs something like abductive inference in the method of *Capital* (cf. Sayer 1979: 115-22), and he has gone in for a good deal of criticism on this count (cf. Murray 1983: 490; Kain 1986: 156 fn 28; Wilson 1991: 124-30).

I do not propose to discuss the method of *Capital* in this dissertation. I think we can see, however, that Sayer does in fact go wrong, just insofar as he confuses abductive inference *qua* procedure of discovery with abductive inference *qua* procedure of justification. He claims, for instance, that the role of abduction in Marx is not to provide “criteria of *truth*,” but only to account for Marx’s move from “phenomenal [i.e., A-framework] *explananda* to provisional [R-framework] *explanans*” (Sayer 1979: 117). Nevertheless, Sayer relies on abductive inference to account not just for the genesis of Marx’s hypotheses, but for their reasonability, and indeed takes

abductive inference to provide Marx with “clear and formulable criteria” (117) for distinguishing more from less adequate frameworks. In this, he blurs the line between justification and discovery.

27. Another complaint that might be raised against both Sayer’s reconstruction and my own, however, is that it is somehow anachronistic to attribute abductive inference to Marx. This charge is unfounded. Recent scholarship has uncovered early reflections on abduction in both Schelling (cf. Matthews 2007: 68-81; Woodard 2020) and Hegel (cf. Redding 2003). Moreover, Kant clearly anticipates Peirce’s later reflections on abductive inference in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in his discussion of so-called “pragmatic belief.” He provides the following example:

The doctor must do something for a sick person who is in danger, but he does not know the illness. He looks to the symptoms, and judges, because he does not know of anything better, that it is consumption. His belief is merely contingent even in his own judgment; someone else might perhaps do better. I call such contingent beliefs, which however ground the actual use of the means to certain actions, *pragmatic beliefs* (Kant 1998: A824/B852).

28. My claim is that Marx attempts, by his appeals to “abstraction,” to explain how we arrive at genuinely new (i.e. ampliative) results in our reasoning. He aims to free us up from the default conservatism of previous methods, on which new theories emerge as necessary results from their less adequate predecessors. He trusts that we are in fact capable of ampliative reasoning, even if he lacks a detailed account of the capacity involved. This explains his relative silence on the topic.

29. In his own discussion of “the capacity for abstraction,” Hegel holds up Johannes Kepler as “the greatest exponent of this mode of cognition” (Hegel 1975: 139). This accords with Peirce’s claim that Kepler’s arrival at laws describing the curve of Mars’s orbit—understood as the underlying reality that explains both Kepler’s and Tycho Brahe’s numerous astronomic observations—is “the greatest piece of Retroductive [i.e., abductive] reasoning ever performed” (Peirce 1931: 1.74).

Hegel points out in particular, however, that Kepler “had to have an a priori knowledge of ellipses, cubes, and squares and of the ideas concerning their relations before he could discover his immortal laws from the empirical data at his disposal” (Hegel 1975: 139). Likewise, Peirce claims that “Kepler’s discovery would not have been possible without the doctrine of conics” (Peirce 1931: 1.75). Though abduction arrives at candidate R-frameworks through the exercise of a special imaginative capacity, it also relies upon antecedent knowledge: Peirce relies upon his knowledge of the Turkish municipal structure in his abduction about the governor; likewise, Kant’s physician relies on prior medical training in his abduction concerning his patient’s tuberculosis.

30. Marx, too, allows that antecedent knowledge plays a role in directing abduction. He urges his reader to abandon traditional philosophical preoccupations, “to leap out of it and devote oneself like an ordinary man to the study of actuality” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 236). Still, he recognizes that this study, though directed at real-world happenings and not just ideas, will presuppose prior learning. He points out that “there exists also an enormous amount of literary material” dealing with these real-world concerns, though this is “unknown, of course, to the philosophers” (236).

In the next chapter, I will make clear that Marx draws upon a great deal of prior literary material, both empirical and otherwise, in the formulation of his mature anthropological R-framework. He draws upon writings in political economy and history, but also upon his own earlier anthropological writings, and the writings of Hegel. These A-frameworks inform Marx’s abduction, but his proposed R-framework does not follow from them by necessity. Marx draws upon these influences in the formulation of his R-framework just as Kepler draws upon his training in geometry and musicology in the formulation of his three laws. Thus, on Exculpatory Naturalism, A-frameworks can function as heuristics or models, guiding abductive inference.

31. In addition to this heuristic influence of past frameworks, Marx also recognizes a causal influence of environmental factors on our abductions. I will discuss this in more detail in the next chapter, under the heading of Marx's theory of ideology. For now, it is enough to observe that Marx takes certain inquirers to be objectively better-positioned than others when it comes to abducting successful explanations. He writes, for instance, that "consciousness can sometimes appear farther advanced than the contemporary empirical conditions, so that in the struggles of a later epoch one can refer to earlier theoreticians as authorities" (83). These earlier theoreticians see further than their contemporaries, and thus come to endorse more adequate R-frameworks.

32. Marx devises an explanation for this variation, from individual to individual, in theoretical reach. I will omit the details for the purposes of this chapter. He makes clear, however, that it is only "under favourable circumstances [that] some individuals are able to rid themselves of their local narrow-mindedness" (264). On a naïve approach, we might take this to mean that differing circumstances impose different ideas upon our minds from without, like a seal upon wax; or that differing circumstances cause us to literally see less (i.e. in the crude sense of failing to receive all of the relevant sense impressions). On views of this sort, an optimal inquirer is a maximally passive inquirer—one whose personal constitution poses no obstacle to their receiving data from without.

The aim of theorizing, however, is to punch through the appearances to underlying reality. If concept-formation just consisted in the passive receipt of ideas from without, it is unclear how we should ever arrive at anything more than a description of surface appearances.³ Incidentally,

³ We find a version of this approach in the French materialists. Helvetius, for instance, writes that my "first surmise" of a new idea is "the effect of a word, a lecture, a conversation, an accident; in short, something to which I give the name of chance" (Helvetius 1777: 258). This chance is not random, but shaped by circumstances. It follows that "by observing the means made use of by chance in forming great men, we might, according to this observation,

this naïve interpretation of Marx's concerns also falls afoul of his criticism of the philosopher's stone (cf. §5.44). Marx is here concerned with the quality of abduction. His claim is that inquirers who begin from opportune circumstances are likely to see further in their exercises of abduction, meaning that they are likely to generate more incisive explanations of A-framework phenomena.

33. Allow me to review. Exculpatory Naturalism begins by considering the world in terms of a given A-framework. It then criticizes that framework along a number of axes (cf. §6.16), bringing out its deficiencies. Like the other methods discussed in this dissertation, it then proposes to move to a candidate R-framework that improves upon those deficiencies. Unlike those other methods, however, it does not propose to derive this R-framework as a necessary result of the A-framework.

Instead, Exculpatory Naturalism instructs practitioners to rely upon their inbuilt capacity for imaginative hypothesis-formation to arrive at a candidate successor which both (i) corrects against observed deficiencies; and (ii) explains the A-framework away. Two sorts of conditions influence our abductions. First, they are informed by prior knowledge. This is the heuristic influence of A-frameworks on R-frameworks. Second, they are influenced by conditions in our environment. I will return to both conditions on abduction in the next two parts of the chapter.

34. Like Genetico-Critical Explication, Exculpatory Naturalism involves both a negative and a positive moment at the level of discovery. First, we criticize received frameworks, then we move to more viable replacements. The negative moment plays a debunking role, while the positive moment contributes some new item of knowledge. As Althusser observes, the method involves

model a plan of education that would, by increasing their number in a nation, vastly retrench the power of this same chance, and diminish the immense share it now has in our instruction" (258-59). Helvetius takes ideas to impress themselves upon us from without. Thus, his "great men" will produce only exact descriptions of the appearances.

both “the *production* of a knowledge and the *critique* of an illusion, in one movement” (Althusser 1969c: 130). This is the iterative and corrective character of criticism, as in Ch. 1 (cf. §1.10).

This iterative function constitutes the distinctive unity of the negative and positive moments of Exculpatory Naturalism’s procedure of discovery: the two moments cohere just insofar as both contribute to the correction and replacement of inadequate A-frameworks.

35. Unlike Genetico-Critical Explication, however, Exculpatory Naturalism does not play a vindicating role, in its positive moment, with respect to the A-framework. The candidate frameworks Exculpatory Naturalism generates do not (necessarily) retain any core contents from their A-framework predecessors. It follows that endorsing the R-framework does not (necessarily) vindicate any component of the A-framework. Likewise, Althusser observes that, while “Hegelian supersession [i.e., explicative inference] pre-supposes that the later form of the process [i.e., the R-framework] is the ‘truth’ of the earlier form [i.e., the A-framework],” there is in fact a “radical *discontinuity*” between the A-framework and the R-framework; the latter aims just to “apprehend[] reality” (Althusser 1969c: 39 fn 39). Exculpatory Naturalism does not vindicate past frameworks.

36. Given this relation of “radical discontinuity,” it follows that Exculpatory Naturalism cannot pursue the discursive continuity solution to the Continuity Problem (cf. §§1.71, 3.23, 5.103). The Continuity Problem arises for methods that propose to reform our concepts. Exculpatory Naturalism must give up discursive continuity, insofar as it denies that the R-framework emerges from the A-framework by necessity. More than this, however, the abductive inference procedure of discovery provides no alternative solution to the Continuity Problem. It follows that, if

Exculpatory Naturalism is to establish any sort of continuity, it will have to be on the side of its procedure of justification. I will now discuss this dimension of Marx's method.

6.2. Procedure of Justification: Genetic Exculpation Revisited

37. It is only after the R-framework is in hand—only after it has been abduced—that its “premises can be ... verified in a purely empirical way” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 31). The question remains, however, how Marx proposes to verify his candidate R-frameworks. In this part of the chapter, I will argue that Exculpatory Naturalism retains its procedure of justification from Genetico-Critical Explication. That is, it retains the genetic exculpation procedure of justification (cf. §3.39). On Exculpatory Naturalism, however, this procedure plays a much more central role, and accordingly takes on additional functions that fail to emerge on Genetico-Critical Explication.

38. Genetic exculpation takes the same initial form in *The German Ideology* as it does in the *1844 Manuscripts*. We begin by describing the world from the perspective of our candidate R-framework. Marx claims that his “manner of approach is not devoid of premises,” but “starts out from the real premises” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 37). We then attempt to explain the A-framework away as an illusion given rise to by definite features of the world as it is described by the R-framework. Thus, Marx claims that an individual's “‘outlook on life’ [i.e., their A-framework]—even the warped one of the philosophers—[can], of course, only be determined by their actual life [i.e., their existence as described by the R-framework]” (438). Likewise, he claims that “[r]eligion is from the outset *consciousness of the transcendental* arising from actually existing forces” (93).

In both of these examples, Marx explains the content of the A-framework away as an illusion in terms of an *explanans* (i.e. “actual life” or “actually existing forces”) that is visible only

from the R-framework. Thus, Marx proposes to explain the A-framework away in terms of an element that is in principle unavailable to those who remain committed to the A-framework.

39. As before (cf. §3.43), genetic exculpation functions to exculpate adherents to inadequate frameworks, treating them as good-faith inquirers whose best efforts to arrive at the truth are frustrated by objectively misleading features of reality. To this end, genetic exculpation identifies, from the perspective of the R-framework, some definite set of framework principles that observers are likely to adopt, given actually-obtaining states of affairs. Marx refers to these as “the mundane illusions of those who are practically involved in the present-day world” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 235). To explain an A-framework away is to show that it is responsive to the appearances and not to the underlying reality. Accordingly, to endorse the appearances that arise in any given epoch is to fall prey to “the illusions of these epochs,” whereas to endorse an A-framework that reflects those appearances is to fall prey to yet deeper “philosophical illusions about those illusions” (145).

40. Thus, Marx takes it as criterial for the adequacy of candidate R-frameworks that they provide genetic exculpations of their A-framework predecessors. He criticizes Stirner, for instance, for failing to “look[] at the real history of the Middle Ages” to explain how medieval theological A-frameworks are “brought about by wholly empirical causes” (154). This makes clear that Marx takes rival frameworks to fail of justification in case they fail to exculpate their predecessors.

Marx refers to the entities and events described by the R-framework as “material premises” (35). Thus, he draws an analogy between the causally antecedent role these elements play in the explanation of past frameworks (and other phenomena), and the logically antecedent role premises play in the structure of an argument. With this in mind, he claims that his mature anthropological

R-framework “empirically observes the actual material premises as such and for that reason is, for the first time, *actually* a critical view of the world” (236). Thus, it is only because it picks out the material premises (i.e. the elements that explain the A-framework away) that Marx’s R-framework is “a critical view of the world,” where being “critical” means surviving rational scrutiny (cf. §1.8).

41. Marx employs genetic exculpation consistently throughout *The German Ideology*. This is less than obvious only because he always frames these exculpations directly in the vocabulary of his R-framework. Thus, he omits to mention, when he gives a genetic exculpation of some framework, that he does so from the perspective of another, rival framework; he prefers to suggest that he is explaining these frameworks away directly in terms of reality. This is the sense in which Marx “starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 37). His exclusive concern is to articulate and defend his own candidate R-framework.

We see an example of this in Marx’s criticism of Bauer’s treatment of “the important question of the relation of man to nature” (39). He claims that this question, though it produces “all the ‘unfathomably lofty work’ on ‘substance’ and ‘self-consciousness’, crumbles of itself when we understand that the celebrated ‘unity of man with nature’ has always existed in industry and has existed in varying forms in every epoch according to the lesser or greater development of industry” (40). Here, Marx exculpates Bauer’s A-framework, where <man> and <nature> are defined spiritualistically, in terms of his own candidate R-framework, which defines them in naturalistic terms. The justificatory function of this passage is obscured only by its directness.

42. The question might arise whether genetic exculpation just is abductive inference, now in its role as procedure of justification (i.e. as inference to the best explanation). After all, genetic

exculpation does propose to treat as justified only those R-frameworks adequate to explaining a definite set of phenomena. Genetic exculpation, however, demands more from its explanations.

Suppose that I have observed, from the perspective of the A-framework, some inconsistent pattern of events in the domain of phenomena D. On inference to the best explanation, my approach will be to infer to whatever R-framework best explains that pattern of events. My R-framework is justified just in case it explains the pattern in D more successfully than available alternatives, where success is measured in part by formal criteria (e.g. coherence, consilience, economy). This procedure is wholly empiricistic in its orientation, in the sense that it takes the only task a candidate R-framework must satisfy to be correctly describing and explaining the empirical content of D.

Genetic exculpation, however, imposes an additional requirement. My R-framework must also account for the false plausibility of the A-framework. Approached from one angle, this is a trivial modification to inference to the best explanation: it simply expands the scope of D, adding one additional event to the class of *explananda*. From another angle, the difference is essential.

43. Marx holds that, if we are going to modify our way of thinking through criticism, we must hold ourselves accountable to past ways of thinking. Thus, referring to the criticism of methods, he writes that “[i]t is only possible to criticize such constructions ... by demonstrating how they are made and thereby proving oneself master over them” (511). Exculpatory Naturalism is, at bottom, a method of criticism, and its aim is to correct and iterate upon previous frameworks. Its principal aim, therefore, is to exculpate A-frameworks. It develops its gradually more adequate empirical-descriptive frameworks only as a means to making possible these exculpating explanations.

In this sense, Exculpatory Naturalism is not empiricistic, but rationalistic, in its outlook: though its ultimate result is to produce R-frameworks adequate to the world itself, and though it

does so by strictly naturalistic procedures of criticism, it iterates upon our knowledge of the world just through the criticism of concepts. Thus, Exculpatory Naturalism is a rationalistic naturalism.

44. The desideratum that R-frameworks demonstrate how their A-framework predecessors are made, and thus prove themselves master over them, relates to Marx's claim, in the second of his "Theses on Feuerbach," that claims to knowledge must ultimately be adjudicated in practical terms. In particular, Marx writes that "[t]he question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a practical question," and that "[m]an must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice" (6).

45. This formulation has misled many of Marx's readers—including both Engels and Lenin—into supposing that he accepts one or another untenable procedure of justification. Thus, Engels writes in *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* that "we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural phenomenon by bringing it about ourselves, producing it out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes" (Engels 1990: 367). Likewise, in his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, Lenin writes that "the 'success' of human practice proves the correspondence between our ideas and the objective nature" (Lenin 1962: 140).

46. On one interpretation, the Engels-Lenin reading of Marx's practical criterion for concept adequacy suggests a naïve empiricism. Thus, we confirm the adequacy of our concepts by (i) employing them as guides in our practical interventions; and (ii) confirming empirically that the expected results come about. This is a version of verificationism, resembling in particular C. I. Lewis's pragmatic empiricism. On this view, the core function of empirical belief is to signal

“desirable and undesirable eventualities of experience likely to ensue if certain modes of action are, on specific occasions, adopted,” and such belief is justified in case “the empirical eventualities which are signaled actually ensue when the mode of action is adopted” (C.I. Lewis 1962: 15).

The arguments against naïve empiricist procedures of discovery, reconstructed in the previous chapter (cf. §5.81), hold also for naïve empiricist procedures of justification. Insofar as Marx rules out theories and methods which rely on the philosopher’s stone (i.e. a model on which knowledge is imposed upon us from without, and thus immune to further criticism) he cannot countenance naïve or foundationalist empiricisms of the sort Lewis defends (cf. Klemick 2020).

47. On the alternative interpretation, the Engels-Lenin reading of Marx amounts to a kind of intuitionism about practice. On this view, I confirm my empirical beliefs through practice not by observing that expected results come about, but by exercising some special non-observational capacity for knowing what I am doing, and with what degree of success. This is, roughly, the doctrine of “practical knowledge” defended by G. E. M. Anscombe. She writes that “a man usually knows the position of his limbs without observation” (Anscombe 1963: 13), and likewise that when “I shut my eyes and write something,” and “what I say I am writing ... in fact appear[s] on the paper[,] ... my capacity to say what is written is not derived from any observation” (53).

I will not delve into Anscombe here, save to note that serious efforts have been made to make sense of Marx’s understanding of practice in just these terms (cf. Haase 2018: 243-49).

48. I do not propose to criticize this latter interpretation directly, but to bypass it. On both variations, the Engels-Lenin reading of Marx’s practical criterion of concept adequacy presupposes a definite idea of what it means to say that the relevant criterion is “practical.” In

particular, it follows Kant, who defines “practical reason” as that sort of reason “concerned with the determining grounds of the will, which is the faculty either of producing objects corresponding to representations or of determining itself to effect such objects” (Kant 2015: 5:15).

Our concepts are adequate, therefore, just in case they give rise to conceptually articulated intentions that in turn determine our will in such fashion as can succeed in bringing those intentions to fruition in reality. Marx does countenance this sort of thing in *Capital* (cf. Marx 1996: 188). It is not, though, what he means by “practice,” when he treats it as a condition on concept adequacy.

49. Marx makes his meaning clear in *The German Ideology*. In a key passage, he considers a “man who, as a youth, stuffed his head with all kinds of nonsense about existing powers [i.e., an inadequate A-framework],” but now “no longer looks at the world through the spectacles of his fantasy” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 126). Marx claims that, now that he has “destroy[ed] the *fantastic* corporeality which the world had for him [i.e., through criticism], he finds its real corporeality outside his fantasy” (126). Marx dismisses Stirner for holding that, “the man ... *actually destroys all these* [existing] *powers* by getting out of his head his false opinion of them” (126). The powers remain. All that has changed is the man’s understanding of these powers.

This just means that now, the man in question “has to think of the *practical* interrelations of the world, to get to know them and to act in accordance with them” (126; my emphasis). He has to study the causal structures that determine outcomes in his environment, so that he can pursue his own aims intelligently. The “practical interrelations” he must study are explanatory relations.⁴

⁴ Marx uses the term “practice” in different ways in different contexts. In the eighth of the “Theses on Feuerbach,” for instance, he adds the following remark: “All mysteries which mislead theory into mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 8). This formulation is anticipated by an earlier one, in the *1844 Manuscripts*. There, Marx invokes the “practical” basis of beliefs to demonstrate the explanatory reach of his ethnological productionism (cf. §4.22). Thus, he writes that [t]he extent to which the solution of theoretical riddles is the task of practice and effected through practice, the extent to which true practice is the condition of a real and positive theory, is shown, for example, in

50. In an early article, the “Justification of the Correspondent from Mosel,” Marx relates this point about “practical interrelations” to the role of intention in practice. In particular, he makes clear that he does not conceive of practical questions in terms of Kant’s practical reason. He writes that

[i]n investigating a situation *concerning the state* one is all too easily tempted to overlook the *objective nature of the circumstances* and to explain everything by the *will* of the persons concerned. However, there are *circumstances* which determine the actions of private persons and individual authorities, and which are as independent of them as the method of breathing. If from the outset we adopt this objective standpoint, we shall not assume good or evil will, exclusively on one side or on the other, but we shall see the effect of circumstances where at first glance only individuals seem to be acting. Once it is proved that the phenomenon is made *necessary* by circumstances, it will no longer be difficult to ascertain the *external* circumstances in which it must *actually* be produced and those in which it could not be produced, although the need for it already existed. This can be established with approximately the same certainty with which the chemist determines the *external* conditions under which substances having affinity are bound to form a compound (Marx 1975: 337).

Marx’s aim, in this passage, is to argue that intention or will plays a fairly minimal role in shaping social reality. When we inquire into the causes of definite social outcomes, we should search for the “*external* circumstances” responsible before taking stock of the intentions of those involved.

In another early article, the “Critical Marginal Notes on the Article by a Prussian,” Marx contrasts this objective standpoint with what he now calls the “*political* mind,” which “thinks *within* the framework of politics” (Marx and Engels 1975a: 199). He claims that “[t]he principle of politics is the *will*,” such that “[t]he more one-sided and, therefore, the more perfected the *political* mind is, the more does it believe in the *omnipotence* of the will, the more is it blind to the

fetishism. The sensuous consciousness of the fetish-worshipper is different from that of the Greek, because his sensuous existence is different. The abstract enmity between sense and spirit is necessary so long as the human feeling for nature, the human sense of nature, and therefore also the *natural* sense of *man*, are not yet produced by man’s own labour (Marx and Engels 1975a: 312).

Here, Marx proposes to exculpate the inadequate A-framework of the fetishist (i.e. someone who takes objects to contain spirits) in terms of social facts describable from his own early anthropological R-framework. It is clear, however, that his use of the term “practice,” in the eighth thesis, refers to the practical activity of individuals as described on this early R-framework. It is the “comprehension of practice” that is concerned with causal structure.

natural and spiritual *limits* of the will, and the more incapable is it therefore of discovering the source of social ills” (199). To conceive of practice too much in terms of the will, therefore, is to be wholly impractical—to render oneself incapable of grasping or intervening in real-world affairs.

51. These passages shade into the first-order commitments that define Marx’s R-framework. The methodological lesson contained in them, however, is this: to take a practical approach to some matter is not to approach it first-personally, from the perspective of the agents involved, *a la* Kant’s practical reason; it is, instead, to adopt a third-personal “objective standpoint,” and study the “practical interrelations” that give rise to and govern this matter.

Considerations of “practice,” in this sense, correspond to what Kant calls “technical” reason, which concerns “the *art* of bringing about that which one wishes should exist,” and belongs to “the theoretical knowledge of nature” (Kant 2000: 20:200). To take a practical approach, in Marx’s sense, is not to study practical reason, as in so-called “practical philosophy,” but to investigate the first-order theoretical questions (i.e. concerning the causal structure of reality) relevant to bringing out real-world practical outcomes.⁵

52. Marx’s interest in carving the explanatory relations that undergird social reality extends to identifying the causes of our ideas. Through genetic exculpation, practitioners of Exculpatory Naturalism identify, from the perspective of the R-framework, the “practical interrelations” (i.e. the laws or mechanisms) responsible for giving rise to the A-framework. This is the sense in which

⁵ This despite the claims of Max Horkheimer, and other members of the Frankfurt School, that Marx’s philosophy is defined, first and foremost, by its criticism of instrumental (i.e. technical) reason. See Horkheimer (2013). The Frankfurt School reading of Marx overlooks Marx’s pivotal rejection of immanent criticism as a method for philosophy (cf. §§3.22, 5.104), and it gets his views on technical reason exactly backward. Moreover, it tends to ignore the greater part of Marx’s first-order theorizing in political economy and anthropology in favor of the vague stuff of psychoanalytical description. There is very little of Marx in so-called Frankfurt School Marxism.

“[t]he question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking ... is a practical question” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 6). Establishing the adequacy of the R-framework requires identifying those explanatory relations that account for the genesis of the A-framework.

Thus, the R-framework describes the technical means by which we could, in principle, intervene, in laboratory style, to generate acceptance of the A-framework in a test population. This is simply a reformulation, in terms of Marx’s criterion of practice, of the requirement that R-frameworks exculpate their A-framework predecessors by identifying, in their own descriptive vocabulary, the misleading evidence that waylays previous inquirers’ best efforts at understanding.

53. On both formulations, the genetic exculpation test for R-frameworks also represents a moderate conservatism requirement. Exculpatory Naturalism requires that its R-frameworks should be answerable to their A-framework predecessors. This does not impose constraints on what contents can appear in the R-framework—that would be an excessive conservatism—but it requires that R-frameworks be capable of accounting for the genesis of their predecessors. Thus, genetic exculpation secures both the practicality of the R-framework, and its answerability to the tradition.

54. In its role as a moderate conservatism requirement, genetic exculpation contains Exculpatory Naturalism’s solution to the Continuity Problem. I have argued that, if Exculpatory Naturalism is to resolve the Continuity Problem at all—and not bite the bullet on generating unintelligibly topic-changing responses to questions posed by the A-frameworks it criticizes—then its solution will have to arise at the level of the procedure of justification (cf. §6.36). In fact it does.

Genetic exculpation secures continuity between A-framework and R-framework by requiring that practitioners of the method be capable, in principle, of explaining, in the conceptual

vocabulary of the R-framework, why practitioners of the A-framework come to believe as they do. Call this relation of continuity between frameworks “exculpatory continuity.”

55. Exculpatory continuity is a much weaker relation of continuity than the discursive continuity established by methods deploying the explicative inference procedure of discovery. Nevertheless, it is a relation of continuity. This can be seen by contrasting the relation established between frameworks on genetic exculpation with that established on inference to the best explanation.

56. Marx rejects the utilitarian social theory, on which acts are evaluated in terms of the quantum of utility represented thereby. He claims, by way of genetic exculpation, that “[t]he apparent absurdity of merging all the manifold relationships of people in the *one* relation of usefulness” is a “metaphysical abstraction” that “arises from the fact that in modern bourgeois society all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 409). Thus, Marx establishes continuity between his own R-framework and the utilitarian A-framework by explaining the A-framework away in terms of the R-framework.

Suppose, however, that Marx had arrived at his R-framework by inference to the best explanation (i.e. that he took its justificatory status to turn just on its being the best possible explanation of the social facts). He would then simply describe the prevalence of the “monetary-commercial relation” in “modern bourgeois society,” and leave it at that. This is the difference between meeting a friend’s feverish delusion that a man is leering at them from the corner with (i) “There is no man in the corner; this fever has you hallucinating” and (ii) “There is an old pair of skis in the corner.” The first is a direct response. The second fails to establish its own relevance.

57. Some philosophers will claim that exculpatory continuity is not sufficient to avoid falling afoul of the Continuity Problem. Others will find it sufficient. I suspect that the disagreement owes to an underlying difference in epistemic stances. I follow Bas van Fraassen in understanding a stance as a kind of non-doxastic commitment which, when adopted, “guides ways of dealing with one’s problems though without providing algorithms,” such that “implementation involves decisions of various sorts, subject to consistency with the associated strategy” (van Fraassen 2004: 175). Disagreements between stances cannot always be resolved through argument. Moreover, the taking of a stance cannot be categorically justified. It can only be justified relative to definite ends.

58. W. A. Suchting argues that “materialism,” in Marx’s sense, is “not a set of assertions about the world but a ‘thesis’ in the etymological sense of a ‘position’: a place where one stands,” from which “certain perspectives are vouchsafed and not others” (Suchting 1986c: 60). Suchting is wrong to attribute this view to Marx. As I will argue in the next chapter, the idea of materialism as a partisan commitment emerges only with Lenin (cf. Lenin 1966: 227-36). Nevertheless, I suspect that Suchting correctly diagnoses the source of the disagreement between those who take Exculpatory Naturalism to resolve the Continuity Problem, and those who take it to fall short.

59. Exculpatory Naturalism proposes to describe how things actually are, and to respond to A-framework questions in just those terms. It abandons the form of A-framework concepts in favor of their underlying matter (i.e. the real entities and events they set out to describe). Whether we take genetic exculpation to secure sufficient continuity to resolve the Continuity Problem will depend on whether we take retention of *de dicto* forms to be criterial for that continuity. One suspects there is no argument that will persuade a Lynne Rudder Baker or a John McDowell that

neurophysiological answers respond intelligibly to questions about the mental (cf. Baker 1989: 105; McDowell 1998: 289). This rigidity owes to an underlying formalistic stance commitment.

It suffices, therefore, to show that Exculpatory Naturalism establishes exculpatory continuity between frameworks. My suspicion is that those generally disposed to tow the naturalistic or materialistic line will be persuaded that Marx's method avoids changing the topic.

60. Moreover, Marx's conservatism argument—both his Accommodation Argument (cf. §2.72) and his criticism of the philosopher's stone (cf. §5.97)—would seem to suggest that any method capable of guaranteeing retention of *de dicto* forms from the A-framework will also risk conceptual accommodation. Thus, the stance, just described, that *de dicto* forms must be retained in order to establish intelligible continuity between frameworks, may have as its natural consequence an excessive or even dogmatic conservatism. In this connection, therefore, those committed to the critical program in philosophy may be better disposed to take the materialist or naturalist line.

6.3. Answer to Marx's Conservatism Arguments

61. The results of the first two parts of the chapter are as follows. Marx abandons explicative inference as his procedure of discovery, replacing it by abductive inference. Practitioners of Exculpatory Naturalism arrive at their candidate R-frameworks, therefore, by exercising a special capacity for imaginative guesswork, while also drawing heuristically upon previous learning.

On the side of justification, Marx retains his earlier procedure: genetic exculpation. He proposes to justify candidate R-frameworks, and thus to prove both the practical worth of the R-framework and its continuity with the tradition, by explaining the apparent plausibility of the A-framework away in terms of objectively misleading evidence describable from the perspective of

the R-framework. This resolves the Continuity Problem, at least to the satisfaction of those who take a materialistic or naturalistic stance towards questions of conversational relevance. Those who take a formalistic stance will not be satisfied—but will themselves likely fall prey to dogmatism.

62. I have argued that Marx adopts his early method, Genetico-Critical Explication, in part to avoid the threat of excessive conservatism represented by its predecessor method, Rational Explication (cf. §3.58). I have also argued, however, that Genetico-Critical Explication fails to split the horns of the dilemma raised by Marx's Accommodation Argument, and thus fails to secure against the threat of excessive conservatism (cf. §5.93). Marx adopts Exculpatory Naturalism as his mature replacement for Genetico-Critical Explication. Since it aims to improve upon this earlier method, it must provide some means by which to secure against the threat of conceptual accommodation.

63. On his early method, Marx replaces Rational Explication's simple coherence test with the genetic exculpation procedure of justification. This ensures that every R-framework improves upon the representational adequacy of its predecessor, as genetically exculpating an A-framework requires both (i) replicating its descriptive and explanatory successes; and (ii) explaining away its failures (cf. §3.42). This resolves one of the two sources of pernicious conservatism Marx diagnoses in Rational Explication: its failure to correct against representational error (cf. §2.45).

Exculpatory Naturalism retains the genetic exculpation procedure of justification from Genetico-Critical Explication. It follows that it, too, corrects against representational error.

64. With Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone, it becomes clear that this is not sufficient. Ensuring that our method corrects against representational error is not enough to neutralize the

effects of the other major source of pernicious conservatism: the retention of core contents across reforms. In particular, Genetico-Critical Explication retains the explicative inference procedure of discovery from Rational Explication, and thus still proposes to derive candidate R-frameworks from their less adequate A-framework predecessors by necessity of explicative inference.

For each A-framework, there is one and only one R-framework that follows by explicative inference. Accordingly, the pool of candidate R-frameworks on Genetico-Critical Explication is identical to the pool on Rational Explication: it is just the set of R-frameworks that follow by explicative necessity from existing A-frameworks. Moreover, the R-frameworks countenanced by Genetico-Critical Explication retain every bit as much from their A-frameworks as do those countenanced by Rational Explication. Under these conditions, the genetic exculpation check on the representational adequacy of R-frameworks can do nothing to secure against accommodation.

65. Exculpatory Naturalism, however, drops the explicative inference procedure of discovery, replacing it by the non-necessary abductive mode of inference. This means that Exculpatory Naturalism cannot claim that its proposed R-frameworks follow by rational necessity from existing A-frameworks. It also means that it is not a perennial method in philosophy: it does not suppose that finished knowledge is available to us, in principle, from the very start of inquiry (cf. §5.103). Instead, our arrival at finished knowledge depends on fortuitous and non-necessary imaginative inferences from A-frameworks, understood as appearances, to the underlying reality.

Thus, Exculpatory Naturalism resolves the second source of conservatism identified by Marx. No core contents are preserved across reforms. Moreover, Exculpatory Naturalism has the virtue of answering the Accommodation Argument not just on Marx's formulation, which targets

these two sources, but also on its maximally generalized formulation, which targets the necessity of explicative inference (cf. §2.71). Here, the emergence of the R-framework is a contingent event.

66. Exculpatory Naturalism does not involve the philosopher's stone, understood as a model of human cognition as imposed upon the inquirer from without, like a stamp upon wax. It resembles neither Sellars's "myth of the given" (W. Sellars 1991: §26), nor Popper's "instruction from without" (Popper 1994: 8). Instead, it closely resembles Popper's preferred model of learning as a process by which "new structures and new instructions arise by trial changes from *within the structure* ... which are [then] subject to natural selection or the elimination of error" (5).

67. I have acknowledged, however, that even on Exculpatory Naturalism, prior (i.e. A-framework) belief plays an important heuristic role in shaping candidate R-frameworks (cf. §6.30). Does this pose a risk of conservatism? In particular, does it not threaten to smuggle A-framework commitments into the R-framework? No, it does not—or not, at least, in any pernicious way.

John Dalton may draw heuristically upon the atomistic metaphysics of Lucretius in formulating his atomic theory of matter (cf. Johnson and Wilson 2007: 144). This does not entail, however, that modern atomic theory contains, either in part or in whole, the framework of *De rerum natura*. To say that a given R-framework is heuristically continuous with a given A-framework is to say (i) that this R-framework would not have arisen had its author not been familiar with the corresponding A-framework; and (ii) that the A-framework itself, or the objects described thereby, function as models either for the R-framework itself, or for the objects described thereby.⁶

⁶ This account corresponds roughly to Marx Wartofsky's conception of the heuristic role of metaphysical theories in the formation of scientific theories. See Wartofsky (1979).

This does not entail that R-framework conclusions, as it were, follow upon A-framework premises, nor that there is any identity of principles between the two frameworks. Heuristic continuity between A-framework and R-framework does not entail their discursive continuity, nor their logical or semantical contiguity or similarity. A candidate R-framework may draw heuristically upon a given A-framework while differing from it on nearly every axis of comparison.

68. More important, perhaps, is the fact that, even when drawing upon A-frameworks as heuristics, Exculpatory Naturalism does not treat retention of core contents from those A-frameworks as criterial for the candidacy of an R-framework. By contrast, methods that rely upon explicative inference as their procedure of justification treat only frameworks that retain core contents from the A-framework as candidate R-frameworks (i.e. because all frameworks that follow by explicative inference from the A-framework retain such contents). Exculpatory Naturalism accepts no such *a priori* constraints on candidate R-frameworks, and thus frees itself up to employ the genetic exculpation procedure of justification as an in-principle check against accommodation.

69. I have just claimed that the heuristic influence of A-frameworks on R-frameworks involves inquirers treating those A-frameworks as analogical models. In the previous chapter, I claimed that Marx criticizes certain models, such as the philosopher's stone, as tending to give rise to conservative outcomes. I have also claimed, however, that taking heuristic influence from a given A-framework does not mean smuggling its principles illicitly into the R-framework. Why, then, does heuristic reliance on the philosopher's stone give rise to conservative outcomes?

Simply put, the upshot of Ch. 5 is not that theories relying on the philosopher's stone import representational errors direct from the philosopher's stone model itself—but that the model tends

to suggest methods that shield certain of the concepts they operate on from criticism. Thus, the model gives rise to conservative outcomes just because it is suggestive of bad methods of criticism. There is no general problem of conservatism relating to models, only particular unfruitful models.

70. Exculpatory Naturalism, therefore, takes up a complex relationship to the A-framework. It begins from the A-framework, and secures answerability to the A-framework through genetic exculpation, but refuses to accommodate the principles constitutive of the A-framework, drawing upon them only heuristically in its abductive formulation of new candidate R-frameworks.

Althusser tries to capture this complex relationship with his talk of knowledge as a “labour of theoretical production” (Althusser 1969b: 149 fn 21) conditioned by “a determinate *mode of production* of knowledges” (Althusser and Balibar 1970: 41). In this, he treats the A-framework not as a premise out of which the R-framework is derived by explicative inference, but as a collection of raw materials out of which the R-framework is produced. This conception is best articulated by Suchting (cf. Curthoys and Suchting 1977: 269-74; Suchting 1986a; 1997: 181-84).

This approach highlights the fact that R-frameworks are always produced under definite real-world conditions (cf. §6.30). It also makes room for the role played by abduction, understood as a creative capacity, in the production of R-frameworks. All labor, being productive activity, involves bringing some creative capacity or other to bear upon given raw materials. I have avoided this language only because I find it distracts from the logical questions that are my central concern.

71. We can profitably describe Exculpatory Naturalism’s refusal to accommodate A-framework principles in terms of the distinction between retentive and eliminative (or displacement) reductions. A retentive reduction is an inter-theoretic reduction that allows for the identification of

entities or properties across theories. Patricia Churchland criticizes those who would insist that reductions in science always be retentive, claiming that this policy is “excessively conservative insofar as it insists on the preservation of the reduced theory,” generating such absurdities as “a retentive reduction of alchemy” and “a retentive reduction of caloric theory” (Churchland 1989: 284). Displacement reduction, on the other hand, simply replaces one framework by another.

Churchland observes that “even ‘observable’ concepts may be reconfigured or eliminated, and occupying the station of ‘intuitive framework’ or ‘folk theory’ protects that framework neither from reduction of the revisionary type nor from outright elimination” (288-89). Likewise, the fact that a given framework is “irreducible” does not always mean that it succeeds in describing reality, as its irreducibility may “be owed to its being so inadequate that it deserves displacement” (288). It should be clear, however, that Exculpatory Naturalism differs from the program Churchland suggests in that it does impose a mild conservatism requirement: genetic exculpation (cf. §6.54).

72. We also profit by recognizing Exculpatory Naturalism as a version of what contemporary philosophers have called “conceptual engineering.” The practitioner of Exculpatory Naturalism does not propose to elucidate the structure of received concepts, but to generate new concepts better suited to the descriptive-explanatory work at hand. In this sense, Marx’s mature method better resembles Carnap’s program of explication (cf. Carnap 1962: Ch. 1; and Carus 2007) than either Bauer’s or Feuerbach’s. Marx will shy away from those varieties of conceptual engineering that propose to measure our concepts against specifically moral criteria (cf. Haslanger 2012: Ch. 13; Díaz-León 2020), on the grounds that they presuppose the adequacy of received moral beliefs.

Exculpatory Naturalism has most in common with naturalistic approaches to conceptual engineering, such as those proposed by Peter Railton (1989) and Kevin Scharp (2020).⁷ What sets it apart is its genetic exculpation requirement. I will not have space, in this dissertation, to explore the independent defensibility of Exculpatory Naturalism as an approach to conceptual engineering. Nevertheless, Marx sketches the outlines of a thoroughgoingly naturalistic and non-moralistic alternative to existing options in the contemporary conceptual engineering debate.

73. *The German Ideology*, like other of Marx's middle-period writings, is highly polemical in style. Some readers of Marx argue that this polemical style stands in the way of straightforward philosophical interpretation (cf. Rockmore 2002: 75; Barbour and Kemple 2005; Carver 2010: 126). On my reconstruction, however, it becomes clear that Marx's polemical style is in fact licensed by his philosophical conclusions. Because Marx rejects the explicative inference procedure of discovery, he is no longer bound to give *a priori* arguments leading his interlocutor from their point of origin (i.e. their A-framework) to his proposed conclusion (i.e. his R-framework). Instead, he simply introduces his candidate R-framework, provides a genetic exculpation of the A-framework at issue, and polemicizes against those who remain unconvinced.

74. Before concluding this part of the chapter, I must note one respect in which Marx's mature method falls short. Even on Exculpatory Naturalism, Marx continues to observe the requirement, discussed in Ch. 3 (cf. §3.80), that the R-framework contain one discrete *explanans* for every A-

⁷ Incidentally, Patrick Greenough has charged Scharp with what he calls "Conceptual Marxism," which he describes as "the view that many (if not most) of our ordinary concepts are, for various reasons, unfit for bearing the load of useful philosophical explanations," such that they "should be removed" (Greenough 2019: 404). My sense is that Greenough draws this connection based just on the analogy between Scharp's attitude toward folk concepts, and Marx's attitude toward capitalist relations of production. He is presumably not aware that Marx in fact holds something like the view on concepts he calls "Conceptual Marxism," nor that Marx has any views at all on the topic.

framework error to be explained. This can be seen in his claim that, “[i]n consciousness—in jurisprudence, politics, etc. [i.e., in A-frameworks]—relations become concepts” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 92). The relations Marx references are the “practical relations” that make up the causal structure of reality, as described on the R-framework. His suggestion is that each of the inconsistent concepts we find in the A-framework corresponds to some definite practical relation.

Thus, though Marx abandons the program of dissolution, he still insists on establishing one-one isomorphy between A-framework *explananda* and R-framework *explanantia*. As on Genetico-Critical Explication, this enforces an illicit conservatism: it imposes *a priori* constraints on the numerical structure of the R-framework. A corrected Exculpatory Naturalism, therefore, would relax this constraint, which is wholly supererogatory, allowing candidate R-frameworks to provide one-many explanations of A-framework confusions in the course of genetic exculpation.

6.4. Exculpatory Naturalism as Historical Materialism

75. I will now offer a brief argument in support of my claim (cf. §6.1) that Exculpatory Naturalism just is the materialist approach to history applied to the special subject matter of philosophy. My discussion will take place in three stages. First, I will define the materialist approach to the history, correcting a common misconception. Then, I will argue that Exculpatory Naturalism just amounts to an application of this method to the history of ideas. To conclude, I will consider the question why, if Exculpatory Naturalism just is historical materialism, it still warrants a title of its own. This will also serve to address any residual worries about why I have chosen to treat Marx’s reflections on historical method, in *The German Ideology*, as contributions to metaphilosophy.

76. The materialist approach to history is concerned to explain the self-conception of those living in a given epoch away in terms of the practical (i.e. causal) relations that structure those individuals' environment. It differs from the approach that would explain events on the ground principally in terms of the intentions and attitudes of the actors involved. Criticizing those who take this opposed, idealist approach to history, Marx writes that “[i]t has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the connection of their criticism to their own material surroundings” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 30).

Thus, historical materialism corresponds to what Marx has called, in another context, the “objective standpoint” on social questions (cf. §6.50). It is a higher-order methodological thesis, concerning the relative explanatory priority of the various determinants in historical explanations.

77. Marx rarely discusses these higher-order concerns without moving directly to discuss the R-framework by which he proposes to describe the practical relations. Thus, introducing his historical materialism, he claims that it is a matter “not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but setting out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 36). Three of the concepts employed in this explanation—<men>, <life-process>, and <ideology>—are technical concepts belonging to Marx’s mature anthropological R-framework.

Thus, many in the Marxist tradition, including both Engels, who played a role in its formulation, and Kautsky, are disposed to identify the materialist approach to history directly with Marx’s mature R-framework (cf. Engels 1987: 25-27; Kautsky 1918: 105-19). Strictly speaking, however, this is a mistake, as one can in principle swap Marx’s R-framework out for one

fundamentally different in its pattern of explanation, while still holding to the general precept that ideas and intentions be explained in terms of underlying practical relations.

78. One way to bring out the above difference is to stress the fact that historical materialism is a view about the proper order of explanation for ideas. The virtue of historical materialism is its recognition that “[m]en are the producers of their conceptions,” such that “[t]he phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process” (36). Even on its earlier formulation, however, Marx’s anthropological framework goes well beyond this. It purports to explain not just the genesis of our ideas, but also, e.g., why exchange relations take the form they do, and why human beings tend to be less healthy than they could be. Historical materialism is a precept specifically of intellectual history. Marx’s R-framework, by contrast, is a general descriptive and explanatory framework, concerned to grasp all aspects of social reality.

79. Thus, we do not need first to have reconstructed Marx’s mature R-framework to know that Exculpatory Naturalism is an application of historical materialism to the special subject matter of philosophy. Exculpatory Naturalism proposes to explain A-framework philosophical confusions—understood as objects of intellectual history—in terms of real-world practical relations as described by the R-framework. This differs from the historical idealism of Rational Explication, which explains A-frameworks only in terms of their having been derived from yet earlier A-frameworks.

80. Marx claims that, on the materialist approach to history, “[m]orality, religion, [and] metaphysics ... have no history, no development” (37). The fact that one framework follows another in the history of philosophy is not to be explained in terms of rational developments within

the discipline, but in terms of real-world events. Now, this runs afoul of standard operating procedure in the history of philosophy. It has not even been my method in this dissertation: I have given a rational reconstruction or rational genealogy of Marx's view, not a causal explanation.

Marx himself allows that we arrive at new views by abduction, and he employs rational criteria (e.g. consistency, clarity, etc.) in his evaluation of rival A-frameworks. He does not deny that these factors are central to the process by which the individual inquirer arrives at new ideas.

81. To make sense of these apparently conflicting claims, I will remind the reader of my earlier discussion of "appearances" in Ch. 3 (cf. §3.43). I distinguished, there, between four distinct levels of content: (i) the individual's subjective ideas about the contents of their concepts; (ii) the objective contents of those concepts, about which the individual can be right or wrong; (iii) the maximally adequate contents those concepts should have; and (iv) the contents ordinary observers are likely to take their concepts to have, given some definite state of affairs.

82. Incidentally, on Exculpatory Naturalism, it is no longer appropriate to talk about the R-framework (or the final framework) in terms of "should." It is only true, on Genetico-Critical Explication, that one should accept R-framework concepts because one is rationally obligated to infer an R-framework from an A-framework if the former follows from the latter by necessity (cf. §1.67). According to Exculpatory Naturalism, this is not the case. Thus, no "should" applies.

On Exculpatory Naturalism, we can make sense of the third level of content only retroactively, from the perspective of the R-framework, as the content we will in fact arrive at, in the fullness of time, after a sufficiently long sequence of abductions. Thus, the four levels of content are as follows: (i) the individual's subjective ideas about the contents of their concepts;

(ii) the objective contents of those concepts, about which they can be wrong; (iii) the maximally adequate contents those concepts will turn out, in the fullness of time, to have; and (iv) the contents ordinary observers are likely to take their concepts to have, given some definite state of affairs.

83. How does this address the conflict between Marx's historical materialist approach to the history of philosophy, and his willingness to accept that rational criteria play a role in the discovery of new philosophical frameworks? It makes clear that there is a difference between what individual inquirers are capable of (Level 1), and the default attitude that most inquirers, forming beliefs in an untutored or spontaneous context, will land on (Level 4)—and thus toward which discourse will gravitate. The appearances, explainable in terms of R-framework practical relations, define this source of gravity. Thus, Marx's claim is that, where A-frameworks fall short of reality, this is to be explained in terms of their responsiveness to trends in intellectual history, which trends are in turn explainable in terms of underlying practical relations. My effort, in this dissertation, has been to reconstruct Marx's individual process of discovery. To hew to Exculpatory Naturalism, however, we must ultimately explain those points on which Marx's R-framework falls short of reality (cf. §3.77) in terms of the underlying practical relations that shape his process of discovery.⁸

84. Marx takes from Hegel the idea that candidate R-frameworks must always be understood in the context of history. We cannot fully understand a framework without understanding its relation to the tradition. On Rational Explication, this relation is construed in intellectualistic terms: the R-framework emerges by necessity from the A-frameworks that precede it. This just is the relation

⁸ Recall that Marx also proposes to account for our successful abductions in terms of underlying practical relations (cf. §§6.31-32). This satisfies David Bloor's requirement, emblematic of the so-called "strong programme" in the sociology of science, that we "seek the same kind of causes for both true and false, rational and irrational beliefs" (Bloor 1976: 175). It does so, however, without discharging in an untenable relativism about frameworks.

of discursive continuity. It accounts both for the provenance of the R-framework (i.e. it emerges from the immediately preceding A-framework), and for its answerability to the tradition.

Marx replaces this intellectualistic conception of the historicity of the R-framework by two naturalistic counterpart notions. First, there is the prospective relation of heuristic continuity: A-frameworks are employed as heuristics or models in the shaping of R-frameworks (cf. §6.67). Second, there is the retrospective relation of exculpatory continuity: R-frameworks describe the practical relations that genetically explain the A-framework, and thus exculpate its advocates (cf. §6.39). This shift in approach also constitutes the transition from historical idealism to historical materialism—a result Marx arrives at only after the false start of Genetico-Critical Explication.

85. Genetic Exculpation, then, just is historical materialism applied to the special subject matter of philosophy. Why does it warrant a special title of its own? In short, because the arguments against Exculpatory Naturalism differ from the arguments against historical materialism in its other applications (e.g. in the history of economics). Thus, the arguments for Exculpatory Naturalism—the arguments against the efficacy of these defeating arguments—will differ as well. The name “Exculpatory Naturalism” functions to pick out this nexus of arguments for and against.

86. One objection to Exculpatory Naturalism that brings out its difference from other applications of historical materialism is the suggestion that philosophy is simply not a historical subject matter at all. Take for example a naïve Platonistic view of the history of philosophy, on which every individual, ancient or modern, is equally well-positioned in principle to grasp the philosophical truths. The Platonist holds, for instance, that theories in philosophy concern the relations between concepts, where concepts are understood as timeless abstracta (i.e. as real universals). They grant

that opinions in philosophy vary, but they deny that individual inquirers holding the philosophical opinions they do can be fruitfully explained in terms of underlying practical relations. Instead, they hold that opinions vary just in accordance with individual mental acumen and devotion to the truth.

87. There is a certain ambiguity here: we must distinguish between the contents of philosophical opinions, and the fact of their being held or taken true (i.e. their preponderance). Consider the claim that that concept X (in a given A-framework) stands in such-and-such inferential relation to concept Y (in the same framework). So long as the principles constitutive of the A-framework remain fixed, the truth-value of this claim will not vary (cf. Dallman and Leiter 2020: 90-91).

The preponderance of a given view, however, is the sort of thing that admits of historical explanation. The A-frameworks available to me as heuristics, and the practical relations that shape my abductions both depend on my historical context. Moreover, on Marx's historical materialist approach to the history of philosophy, modern inquirers are substantially better positioned to arrive at philosophical truths than were their ancient forebears. It follows that philosophy is a historical subject matter. Philosophical opinions are ultimately exculpable in terms of practical relations.

88. Incidentally, Marx holds a much stronger and more encompassing view. In *The German Ideology*, he claims that all sciences—both natural and social—are historical. More exactly, he writes that there is “only a single science, the science of history,” which can be split “into the history of nature and the history of men” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 28-29 fn; crossed out in the manuscript). This countervails the idea that the sciences divide up into experimental or nomothetic sciences like physics, which aim at formulating mathematically expressible laws, and historical sciences like biology or geology, which aim at reconstructing causal sequences.

This distinction is already a somewhat unhappy one (cf. Sober 2000: 18). Many nomothetic sciences model historical sequences in the course of formulating laws, and the historical sciences cannot model historical sequences without developing generalizable frameworks. Marx, however, claims that every natural and social science, up to and including physics, is a historical science.

89. We can make sense of Marx's proposal by imagining a universe of such minimal complexity that it allows of description only in the vocabulary of physics (i.e. a universe in which no entity is sufficiently complex to warrant higher-level description). Now, take it on hypothesis that, in time, interaction between these simple physical systems will give rise to higher orders of complexity, eventually describable in the language of chemistry. Then, in time, these new chemical systems will reach yet greater heights of complexity, such as admit of biological description, and so on.

This sequence reproduces the traditional hierarchy of the sciences, as envisioned by advocates for the unity of science. Marx's account differs, however, in that it conceives of the hierarchy as the sort of thing that emerges in the course of natural history. It is the mature counterpart to Marx's early emergentism (cf. §4.26). Engels attempts to put this picture on systematic foundations, without success, in his *Dialectics of Nature* (cf. Engels 1987: 311-587).

90. This is not the place to enter into a sustained treatment of Marx's views on science. I have mentioned the issue in passing only because it tells us something interesting about the sense in which Exculpatory Naturalism is a naturalism. Exculpatory Naturalism treats ideas as historical phenomena by incorporating them into a broader system of nature, all of which is conceived of as admitting of historical explanation. Intellectual history in principle presupposes natural history. Thus, for Marx, "the priority of external nature remains unassailed" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 40).

By framing philosophical opinion as the sort of thing that admits of explanation in terms of practical relations articulable from the R-framework (i.e. by applying historical materialism to the special subject matter of philosophy), Marx naturalizes the history of philosophy. He treats its disciplinary methods as continuous with those of the natural sciences (conceived of as historical sciences). This is the precise sense, therefore, in which, on Exculpatory Naturalism, “every profound philosophical question is resolved ... into an empirical fact” (39).

Chapter 7 – The Exculpation of <Man> in the Mature Marx

1. I have shown that Marx's mature method emerges as a corrective against the conservatism problems faced by both Rational Explication and Genetico-Critical Explication. Marx abhors excessive conservatism because he is committed to the enlightenment program in philosophy—to philosophical criticism (cf. §1.14). Thus, Marx begins with strictly rationalistic assumptions about philosophy, and arrives at his considered methodological naturalism in the course of his effort to eliminate all inroads to accommodation.

It turns out, therefore, that the naturalism of Marx's mature writings is not a step backward from the sophisticated argumentation of the earlier writings toward a naïve empirical outlook. It is the position to which Marx's consistent adherence to the critical (i.e. fallibilist) program in philosophy drives him. It is not less philosophically reflective than the method of the *1844 Manuscripts*, but measurably more so. It improves upon clearly defined shortcomings in that earlier method. Thus, Exculpatory Naturalism is best understood as a product of rational criticism.

2. Marx's reflections on philosophical method describe a trajectory away from perennial methodological assumptions (i.e. in favor of immanent critique and non-natural explanations) and toward a rationalistic naturalism (cf. §6.43). In today's philosophical climate, dominated by naïve naturalisms on one side, and a revanchist anti-naturalism on the other (cf. Corradini, Galvan, and Lowe 2006; De Caro and Macarthur 2008; Goetz and Taliaferro 2008; Giladi 2019), this rational genealogy can perform an illustrative function, highlighting one possible route to a more critical naturalism.

3. Defending my interpretation of the mature Marx as a consistent naturalist requires showing not just that he suggests a method like Exculpatory Naturalism in his explicit metaphilosophical writings, but that he actually conforms to that method in practice. In this final chapter of the dissertation, therefore, I will use Exculpatory Naturalism as a guide to reconstruct Marx's first-order views in *The German Ideology*. In order, I will reconstruct his theory of history (i.e. his mature ethnological productionism), his theory of ideology, and his refutation of idealism.

4. Those concerned to attach an anti-naturalist significance to Marx's early writings have, on average, been less interested in his reflections on method (e.g. the Accommodation Argument), than in the first-order views he defends (i.e. his early anthropological framework). For this reason, there has been extensive debate concerning whether Marx's theory of history is continuous or discontinuous with his early theory of human nature (cf. Bell 1962; Althusser 2005 [1965]; Hodges 1970; Fetscher 1971; Avineri 1972: 2, 40; McLellan 1973: 295; Ollman 1976; Geras 2016 [1983]; Kain 1986: 1-11; as well as Gouldner 1980: 39). Much of this debate has been directed against an ostensible (Soviet) orthodoxy that favors some version of the discontinuity reading.

In recent decades, however, the consensus has turned. It is now more often assumed that Marx's mature writings presuppose, or are somehow continuous with, not just his earlier ones, but the whole philosophical tradition (cf. Sayers 1998: 104-10; Brenkert 2009: ix-x; Tabak 2012: ix).¹

¹ As Stanley and Zimmerman (1984) have argued, this new consensus tends to blame Engels for generating the ostensible misconception that Marx is a naturalist. This idea begins with Lukács (1968c, p. 3), but is present in the writings of many of Marx's readers (cf. Lichtheim 1961: 234-43; Levine 1975; Carver 1981: 83-84; Thomas 1999: 216; Meikle 1999: 83-87; Rockmore 2018: 73; and, for an overview of the trend, Blackledge 2020). I agree with these readers that Marx and Engels differ in their commitments. It is surprising, however, that anyone should take Engels to represent the source of Marxism's break with Hegel, such that abolishing his influence should allow us to reconnect Marx to the philosophical tradition. This is surprising because, as Colletti (1973, p. 14) has argued, Engels retains much more from Hegel than Marx himself does. Being less sensitive to fine-grained distinctions, Engels fails to recognize the implications of Marx's methodological arguments for some of Hegel's doctrines.

Engels's work, therefore, is the origin place not of the idea that Marx's work represents a scientifically-oriented break with past metaphysics—Marx explicitly understands himself in these terms—but of the myth that

The status of this new consensus as a tacit orthodoxy is then covered over by the suggestion that the debate between the two readings is itself outmoded, or is a parochially 20th-century affair.

5. Now, we cannot understand Marx without coming to some conclusion whether or not his mature writings are continuous with his earlier ones. The question itself cannot be outmoded. What is outmoded in the 20th-century debate is its over-vague notion of continuity. The exact terms of the debate—the exact sense in which the mature Marx is supposed to be continuous or discontinuous with the early Marx—has never been fully specified. Most of the debate’s participants, therefore, have been involved in merely verbal disputes. They simply talk past one another.

What explains this oversight? Ultimately, the debate is political in nature. Its exegetical positions are proxies for political ones, and the wide grain employed in its definitions functions to make possible easy transition between the political and exegetical landscapes. It is not the exegetical dispute itself that is outmoded, therefore, but its political corollary—a partisan dispute whose parties have literally dissolved in the interim. It is often foolish to claim political neutrality in writing. I do propose, however, to abandon these loose definitions in favor of more exact ones.

6. In the final part of the chapter, having reconstructed Marx’s mature R-framework, I will turn to his criticism of his own earlier views. I will argue that Marx provides a genetic exculpation of his early anthropological framework, rejecting it as an illusion given rise to by misleading evidence. This will allow me to specify, at finer grain, the precise senses in which Marx’s mature R-framework is continuous and discontinuous with his earlier framework. In particular, Marx’s mature R-framework stands in relations of heuristic and exculpatory continuity, but not discursive

Marx’s naturalism represents an extension or revision of, rather than total break with, Hegel’s philosophy. This is to say: Engels is not responsible for Scientific Marxism, but for both Dialectical Materialism and Hegelian Marxism.

continuity, with his early framework. This conclusion rules out many of the implications that Marx's readers seek to draw either from the continuity or from the discontinuity of his writings.

7. As in Ch. 4 (cf. §4.3), I will make some controversial exegetical choices in this chapter. These choices are not forced upon me by the methodological concerns of the dissertation. This is not the place, however, to provide extended argument for them—and making one choice or another is necessary in order to paint a compelling picture of what Marx is up to in his first-order theorizing. It is possible to reject my interpretation of the first-order theory, while still accepting my broader argument about Marx's method. I will defend my interpretation, however, in future publications.

7.1. Naturalism and Anthropology Revisited

8. On his mature framework, Marx remains committed to articulating an adequate anthropology. Likewise, his primary subject matter remains human evolution: the progressive trend in human institutions and culture (cf. §4.9). The central concept of Marx's mature R-framework is not <man>, as on his earlier framework, however, but <men> or <individuals>. Thus, he writes that “[t]he first premise of all human history is ... the existence of living human individuals” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 31). On Marx's mature R-framework, <individuals> is a technical concept.

9. Defining <individuals> requires identifying the relations in which it stands to other concepts on Marx's framework. I will survey a number of these in the sections that follow: <production>, <means of subsistence>, <needs>, <physical organization>, <physical nature>, <mode of production>, <productive forces>, <form of intercourse>, <division of labor>, <class>,

<production of life>, and <manifestation of life>. Taken together, these concepts make up the core structure of Marx's mature anthropological framework (i.e. his theory of universal history).

10. Introducing his concept of <men> or <individuals>, Marx writes that, though “[m]en can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like,” the true criterion by which they “distinguish themselves from animals” is that “they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization” (31).

What are means of subsistence? They are those elements necessary to make possible the continued existence of individual human beings. This is a core factor in universal history because “men must be in a position to live in order to be able to ‘make history’” and “life involves before everything else eating and drinking, housing, clothing and various other things” (41-42). The means of subsistence, therefore, function to satisfy our needs. What is a need? It is a feature of my constitution as an individual, and a necessary condition on my continued existence. If something is a need, then I must find a way to satisfy it. I have no choice. Thus, Marx claims that “[i]n the real world, ... where individuals have needs, they thereby already have a *vocation* and *task*” (289).

11. The concepts <means of subsistence> and <needs>, therefore, can be defined (in part) in terms of one another. Marx claims that both means of subsistence and needs admit of study by both the natural and the social sciences. Some facts about the availability to individuals of the means of subsistence are decided in ways initially beyond human control. Thus, individuals born into dry climates will find different means of subsistence, and means of differing quality, than those born into tropical climates. Marx understands these “geographical, geological and hydrographical

conditions” (374) on the initial distribution of the means of subsistence in terms of the “physical organisation of the[] individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature” (31).

Marx also claims, however, that human individuals stand apart from other animals in their capacity to produce their own means of subsistence. He claims that these individuals’ “first historical act is ... the production of the means to satisfy the[ir] needs” (42). As just noted, Marx also takes individuals’ patterns of production to be “conditioned by their physical organization.” Nevertheless, once the production of the means of subsistence is in view, the question whether individuals can satisfy their needs can no longer be settled just by appeal to the facts of natural science. From that moment forward, the satisfaction of needs becomes the object of social science.

12. Likewise, at least some of the individual’s needs “arise[e] directly from his human nature” (289). Thus, if I were constituted very differently as an organism—having more needs, or fewer, being able to subsist (say) on broken glass and potting soil—the circumstances in which my needs would be satisfied would vary accordingly. Marx refers to this fact about my natural constitution as my “physical nature” (31), and recognizes that its proper study belongs to the natural sciences (e.g. to biology). I will return to the question of human nature later in this part of the chapter.

Some of our needs, however, emerge in the course of production. If the only available process for producing food requires digging irrigation canals, then I need the tools necessary to dig irrigation canals. Though this need emerges in the course of history (i.e. concurrent with the development of crude irrigation methods) it is no less a need. Thus, Marx claims that individuals’ first historical act—by which they begin to produce their own means of subsistence—also involves the “creation of new needs” (42). The patterns governing these needs are studied by social science.

13. This transition from the domain of natural science into the domain of social science tracks the productive acts of individuals. Marx devotes greater space to the nature of production in later works (cf. Marx 1986a: 17-48; 1996: 187-208). Here, he provides only passing reflections. He notes that (i) “it is necessary to produce in order to consume” and that (ii) “nothing can be created out of nothing,” with the result that “raw material is consumed in the productive process” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 516). Production is the process by which raw materials are transformed into consumable goods—either for immediate consumption, to sustain the life of the individual, or for consumption in the course of further production, as tools, or as new kinds of raw material.

Thus, there is a further distinction, in production, between that employing only “natural instruments of production,” such as open fields or streams, and that employing instruments “created by civilisation” (63). These latter elements are tools and methods that have themselves been produced in the course of history. Access to natural instruments varies (initially) with the physical organization of individuals. Access to manufactured instruments varies with production.

14. Production always takes some definite form. Thus, Marx claims that “[m]en have history because they must *produce* their life, and because they must produce it moreover in a *certain way*” (43 fn). The process by which we produce our means of subsistence itself changes in the course of production. Marx observes that there is a “historical development of the productive process” according to which “the bread which is produced today by steam-mills, was produced earlier by wind-mills and earlier still by hand-mills” (516). Thus, the concept <production> is determinable. It admits of a host of mutually inconsistent determinations.² Water can be desalinated by multistage

² Many of Marx’s concepts are structured by determinable-determinate relations. Readers who recognize this point often frame the distinction in other terms: “forced” and “concrete” abstractions; “transhistorical” and “historical” concepts; or “general” and “determinate” categories. The underlying distinction, however, is between

flash distillation, by reverse osmosis, or by some other available method. We cannot produce desalinated water, however, without producing it in some one definite way. Just as each colored thing is some determinate color, each productive act conforms to some determinate process.

15. Suppose we take a snapshot of the aggregate productive activity of an entire society. Each individual act of production takes some determinate form (e.g. fish are caught by purse seine, cotton spun by air-jet, and so on). Every one of these determinations is contingent. Each could be otherwise (e.g. the fish could be caught by rod, the cotton spun by mule jenny, etc.). Given available instruments and raw materials, however, and the historical trend up to this point, production in each quarter takes just this form and none other. Marx refers to the complex dispositional fact in virtue of which the individuals comprising a given society tend to adopt just these forms of productive activity and none other as the “mode of production” (43). He refers to the instruments, raw materials, and strategies that decide this outcome as “productive forces” (43).

Thus, in a given society, the prevailing mode of production determines whether and to what extent one finds individuals engaging in certain determinate forms of productive activity. The productive forces are the factors responsible for this dispositional fact. Despite this difference in meaning, Marx sometimes uses the two concepts interchangeably, generating misunderstandings.³

determinables and determinates. See Della Volpe (1980 [1969], pp. 183-86); Colletti (1972, pp. 3-10); Sayer (1979, pp. 31-33, Chs. 4-6; 1987, Ch. 6); Suchting (1982, p. 177 fn 13; 1991, p. 198 fn 80); and Murray (1988, Ch. 10).

³ Moreover, it is clear that Marx uses the term “mode of production” (*Produktionsweise*) differently in *The German Ideology* than elsewhere. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, for instance, he refers to “[r]eligion, family, state, law, morality, science, art, etc.,” as “modes of production” (*Weisen der Produktion*), meaning that they are individual expressions or isolated modalities of the broader system of production (Marx and Engels 1975a: 297; 1975d: 264). Better known is Marx’s brief synopsis of his mature anthropological R-framework in the 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. There, Marx seems to equate “[t]he mode of production of material life” not with the productive forces, but with the “relations of production [i.e., the form of intercourse] appropriate to a given stage in the development of the[] material forces of production” (Marx 1986b: 263). This is the default sense given to “mode of production” in much recent literature, including Dallman and Leiter (2020).

16. There is another factor that enters into production: the system of property relations that decides who owns the forces of production (i.e. the raw materials, instruments, and so on), and who owns the fruits of production. Suppose I am building a shelter from clay bricks. This act of production takes on a very different significance depending on (i) whether the bricks belong to me, or to you; and (ii) whether I am building the shelter for myself, or for you. This is especially clear where both the materials and the product belong to you. Note that, at this level, we are not yet discussing legal property relations, but a more primitive sense of ownership. In this sense, I own a given item just in case the other individuals in my society tacitly recognize or treat me as owning that item. Marx refers to the system of property relations that bears on production as the “form of intercourse” (53).

17. Every form of intercourse also represents a definite configuration of the division of labor. At base, the division of labor just consists in the fact that different individuals make different contributions to the aggregate productive activity of a society. Thus, builders build, farmers farm, and so on. Marx also claims, however, that “the *division of labour* implies the possibility, nay the fact, that intellectual and material activity, that enjoyment and labour, production and consumption, devolve on different individuals” (45). Certain positions within the division of labor are more rewarding. Some positions will involve easier or more gratifying work. Other positions will involve ownership over the forces of production, or over the results of production.

Marx points out, however, that the division of labour represents a limit on the potential of every individual. He writes that “as soon as the division of labour comes into being, each man has a particular exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape ... if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood” (47). Thus, the day trader may be

happier than the day laborer, but he too suffers under the division of labor insofar as he fails to realize his full potential as an individual. He remains stunted, as he is a day trader and little else.

18. Marx's concept of <class>, furthermore, is defined in terms of <division of labor>. He claims that "through the division of labour ... there develop various divisions among the individuals cooperating in definite kinds of labour" (32). Likewise, individuals standing in similar relations of ownership or non-ownership to the forces and results of production have this position, at least, in common. Thus, Marx writes that "in the framework of division of labour personal relations necessarily and inevitably develop into class relations and become fixed as such" (436-37). Under the capitalist form of intercourse, for instance, Marx distinguishes two main classes: the bourgeoisie, who purchase raw materials and tools, and hire wage labor in order to turn a profit; and the proletarians, who rent themselves out as wage laborers in order to keep themselves alive.

Just by occupying one position rather than another in the division of labor, my relationship to the other individuals participating in the production process is already determined in part. No matter what class position I occupy, those occupying the same (or suitably similar) positions are my *de facto* allies when it comes to ownership disputes with those occupying other class positions. This does not suggest, however, that individuals occupying the same class position will always get along. Marx notes that "[t]he separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class," while "in other respects they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors" (77). The core priority of these individuals is just to satisfy their needs.

19. Classes are structural patterns in the division of labor. They are not autonomous collective agents. They do not act independently of the individuals that comprise them, and when those

individuals act, the class itself does not act through them. Marx is especially critical of the idea that, for instance, “the bourgeois is only a specimen of the bourgeois species,” suggesting that “the bourgeois *class* existed before the individuals constituting it” (76). Marx rejects any view on which class floats free of the individuals whose relations constitute it. Readers of Marx have entered into confusion on this point (cf. Lukács 1968b: 149). There are at least two reasons for this confusion.

20. First, class can seem to take on an independent existence because, as Marx recognizes, individuals experience their class position as something imposed upon them. In this sense, “the class ... assumes an independent existence as against the individuals, so that the latter find their conditions of life predetermined, and have their position in life and hence their personal development assigned to them by their class” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 77). Even here, however, it is not the class itself, as a collective entity or species, but the prevailing form of intercourse (i.e. the relations that govern the productive process) that seems to float free of the individuals, imposing itself upon them. That is, the domination of the individuals by their class is in fact “the same phenomenon as the subjection of the separate individuals to the division of labour” (77).

21. Second, individuals occupying the same class position can recognize one another as having goals in common, and work in concert to achieve those goals. Marx holds that many forms of cooperation by the individuals comprising a class are made difficult by “the frequent opposition of interests among them arising out of the division of labour” (371). Nevertheless, he grants that coordinated action is possible. This raises standard problems concerning the metaphysical possibility of collective action and intentionality. Marx holds, however, that “[i]ndividuals always

proceeded, and always proceed, from themselves” (93). Thus, collective action in Marx does not involve the independent movement of a collective subject. All action is the action of individuals.

22. Class is not the only axis of comparison in the division of labor that Marx takes seriously. He claims, for instance, that the division of labor is “originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act” (44). His point is the familiar one: that biological women are afforded an unequal share in the work required to reproduce the species. This begins as a natural fact (i.e. with pregnancy), but enters in time under the influence of social determinants. The progressive refinement of contraceptive methods, for instance, can modify this axis of the division of labor. It has yet to be seen whether developments in the productive forces will fully abolish the difference.

Marx also counts the difference between “material and mental labour” (45), the “separation of town and country” (64), and the “separation of production and intercourse” (66)—that is, the separation between productive industry and what was once called “the merchantry”—as important axes of comparison. Though they belong to the same class, rural and urban laborers are subject to very different (and unequal) conditions. Marx holds that, even within the victorious class under capitalism, there is a division between “the thinkers of the class” and “the active members ... [who] have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves” (60). This explains the apparent hostility between academics and investment bankers. Marx points out, however, that individuals tend to set these differences aside when their class position is threatened from without (cf. 60).

23. Having defined a host of Marx’s key concepts, I am now in position to state the two basic principles of his mature R-framework. The first of these principles is synchronic in nature (i.e. it

concerns the practical relations that shape society at any one moment), while the second is diachronic in nature (i.e. it concerns the development of those practical relations over time).

24. Marx's synchronic principle states that the current form of intercourse (i.e. the system of property relations governing production) is "determined by the existing productive forces" (50), or is "connected with and created by this mode of production" (53). This thesis is sometimes couched in terms of the "primacy of the productive forces" (cf. G.A. Cohen 2000: Ch. 6). How do the productive forces determine the form of intercourse? First, Marx claims that the productive forces determine the division of labor. He writes that "[e]ach new productive force, insofar as it is not merely a quantitative extension of productive forces already known (for instance, the bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further development of the division of labour" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 32). Every way of producing requires individuals whose task it is to produce in that way.

Second, Marx claims that the form of intercourse is just a reflection of the existing configuration of the division of labor. Thus, he writes that "[t]he various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of property, i.e., the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument and product of labour" (32). Thus, if we take a snapshot of society, the facts about available forces of production will explain the facts about the prevailing form of intercourse.

25. Marx's synchronic principle is ultimately quite weak, for two reasons. First, Marx allows that there is a sense in which the "mode of production and form of intercourse ... mutually determine each other" (329). After all, all production presupposes some definite form of intercourse, and

forces of production (in all but limiting cases) must themselves be produced. In particular, the productive forces that exist today, and thus explain the prevailing form of intercourse, presuppose that form of intercourse (or some past form of intercourse) insofar as they too are produced. This does nothing to disqualify Marx's synchronic principle, but it brings out its explanatory limits.

More importantly, Marx acknowledges that the "productive forces" and "the form of intercourse" can sometimes stand in "contradiction" (74). That is, on some snapshots of society, the form of intercourse fails to take the shape we would expect given Marx's synchronic principle. The explanation for these exceptions is provided, in turn, by Marx's second, diachronic principle.

26. Marx assumes that, on a long enough timeline, production will improve upon the reserve of available productive forces both quantitatively (i.e. by increasing the stock of familiar tools and raw materials) and qualitatively (i.e. by introducing new varieties). As this reserve increases, the prevailing form of intercourse, which corresponds to a previous stage in the development of the productive forces, becomes less and less adequate. Because this form of intercourse does not take advantage of the full potential of the existing productive forces, it now functions as a fetter (i.e. an artificial limit) on production. Removing the fetter requires modifying the form of intercourse.

Thus, Marx takes it as a general law of universal history that wherever forms of intercourse have become fetters on production, they will in time be replaced by successor forms more adequate to the productive forces. Thus, Marx's diachronic principle states that, in time,

an earlier form of intercourse, which has become a fetter, is replaced by a new one corresponding to the more developed productive forces and, hence, to the advanced mode of the self-activity of individuals—a form which in its turn becomes a fetter and is then replaced by another. Since these conditions correspond at every stage to the simultaneous development of the productive forces, their history is at the same time the history of the evolving productive forces taken over by each new generation, and is therefore the history of the development of the forces of the individuals themselves (82).

27. Allow me to introduce the standard example. In Europe, modern private property (i.e. capitalism) arises only after the earlier, feudal form of intercourse has become a fetter on production. The feudal form of intercourse involves a division between the nobility, who own the land, and their serfs, who work it. The armed subjection of the serfs is made necessary by the condition of the productive forces: “the sparseness of the population” (34), “the scanty and primitive cultivation of the land,” and the “strip-system” (35)—an agronomic method that relies on crop rotation and carefully coordinated work in the fields to prevent against soil erosion.

Those serfs who escape their duties to their lords flee to the towns, in which they work as independent craftsmen. Those in the towns are forced to collaborate to manage competition and to protect themselves against the inroads of the nobility. This gives rise in time to the guild system, which stabilizes conditions enough for some craftsmen to accumulate a good deal of wealth. In turn, wealthier craftsmen are able to take less-wealthy ones on as assistants, giving rise to “the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which [brings] into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country” (34). All of this owes, directly or indirectly, to the forces of production.

28. The feudal hierarchies of town and country are made necessary by the available productive forces. In time, however, these productive forces undergo change. Improvements to “the means of communication” and “the state of public safety in the countryside” give rise to a special merchant class, which allows for increased commerce between towns (67). In turn, developments in manufacturing technology, especially in weaving, lead to the “rise of manufactures,” which are “branches of production which ha[ve] outgrown the guild-system” (67). In particular, machine weaving requires minimal skill, obviating the feudal guilds’ apprenticeship system.

The existence of a merchant class makes possible the manufacture of large surpluses, to be sold in foreign markets. This makes it possible for single investors to subcontract large quantities of production and turn a large profit. At the same time, “the improvement of agriculture” (69) eliminates the need for the feudal system of land management. This results in the “disbanding of the armies ... that served the kings against their vassals” (69). Those disbanded are hesitant to work, but “[t]he rapid rise of manufactures ... absorb[s] them gradually” (69). The eventual result of the development of the productive forces is capitalism, “freed from the old feudal fetters” (410).

29. Thus, the development of feudalism into capitalism conforms to Marx’s diachronic principle. As the feudal form of intercourse becomes a fetter on the ever-developing productive forces, it falls away, and is replaced by a new form of intercourse.⁴ Thus, the feudal nobility and the guilds, both, are forced to “bow to the might of the great merchants and manufacturers” (70).

30. How does this diachronic principle explain the exceptions, observed above (cf. §7.25), to Marx’s synchronic principle? It construes historical transformation in terms of disequilibrium between forces of production and form of intercourse. Increase in the productive forces upsets the equilibrium, and transformation of the form of intercourse reestablishes it (cf. Dallman and Leiter 2020: 89). Thus, societies allow of both equilibrium and disequilibrium states. During periods of equilibrium, the form of intercourse corresponds directly to the forces of production. Marx’s synchronic principle describes this state of affairs. Marx’s diachronic principle accounts, however,

⁴ There has been extensive debate about what mechanism is responsible for establishing new equilibrium states (i.e. how the form of intercourse is reconstituted once it has become a fetter on production). In particular, some have claimed that growth in the productive forces itself, combined with some broad dispositional features of human nature, is responsible for bringing about new forms of intercourse (cf. McMurtry 1978: 204; G.A. Cohen 2000: 150-60). Others have claimed that it is conflict between the classes that upsets existing relations and brings about new forms of intercourse (cf. Suchting 1982; Miller 1984: Ch. 5). I will remain agnostic on this point for the purposes of this dissertation, save to indicate that the two approaches may not be incompatible (cf. Railton 1986).

for those circumstances in which the synchronic principle fails to describe the configuration of forces of production and form of intercourse: it fails during periods of disequilibrium. It always succeeds, however, in picking out the tendency toward equilibrium exhibited by all societies.

31. Taken together, these synchronic and diachronic principles serve as the foundation of Marx's mature ethnological productionism: his view that the vast majority of a society's ethnological characteristics (i.e. its pattern of consumption, its institutions, its ideas, and its kinship practices) can be explained in terms of its pattern of production (cf. §4.22). Thus, Marx writes that "the aggregate of productive forces accessible to men determines the condition of society, hence, the 'history of humanity' must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 43). Marx's anthropology and economics, therefore, are one.

This approach to anthropology grows out of Marx's claim that the function of a society's mode of production "must not be considered simply as being the reproduction of the physical existence of the individuals," for it enjoins "a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part," with the result that, "[b]y producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life" (31), in all its cultural specificity. The productive activity of the individual, therefore, is the "production of life" (43), and the ethnological attributes explained thereby are "manifestations[s] of life" (262).

32. I will turn, in the next part of this chapter, to Marx's theory of the intellectual (i.e. ideological) manifestations of life. For now, I aim just to demonstrate what I have already suggested (cf. §6.78): that Marx's ethnological productionism purports to explain much more than the subject matter of intellectual history. Marx holds that kinship relations, for instance, emerge directly out of nature.

He refers to the “natural division of labour existing in the family” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 33), which emerges out of the human need “to propagate their kind” (42). In time, however, kinship ties enter under determination by production, such that “the existence of the family [i.e., in its historically definite form] is made necessary by its connection with the mode of production” (181).

Likewise, Marx counts “racial differences” among “the naturally evolved differences within the species” (425), explaining them in terms of “geological, oro-hydrographical, [and] climatic” (31) differences, and thus in terms of “the original, spontaneous organisation of men” (31 fn). Against the race science of his day, he holds that the appearance of inequality between the races is an illusion given rise to by the fact that “the ability of children to develop depends on the development of their parents,” and thus ultimately on the influence of “social relations” that have “arisen historically” (425). That is, Marx holds that existing racial differences are explainable in terms of prevailing social relations, themselves explainable in terms of patterns of production.⁵

33. Recall that, in Ch. 4, I argued that Marx’s early anthropology is by turns humanist, communist, and naturalist. It is humanist insofar as it is concerned with the capacity of individual human beings to realize their full potential (cf. §4.24); it is communist insofar as it treats communism as the ideal form of human activity, against which earlier stages are measured (cf. §4.25); and it is naturalist insofar as it grounds universal history in an evolutionary metaphysics of nature (cf. §4.26).

⁵ The fact that Marx abandons many of the assumptions typical of his contemporaries does not mean that his views on race will satisfy modern expectations. He holds, for instance, that since existing racial differences owe to unequal economic development, these “racial differences ... can and must be abolished in the course of historical development” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 425). By itself, this proposal may offend some sensibilities. Marx goes on, however, to expressly relate this proposal to discoveries in “zoology,” to the effect that “it is possible to improve races of animals and by cross-breeding to create entirely new, more perfect varieties” (425). As in the case of Marx’s antisemitism (cf. §3.77), I find it important to acknowledge these details explicitly, especially where they may indicate conceptual accommodation on Marx’s part. Unlike in the case of his antisemitism, however, I do not think that Marx’s analogy to animal eugenics makes any essential contribution to his candidate R-framework.

34. Marx's mature anthropology remains humanistic in its orientation, and thus concerned with the well-being of individuals. As before, Marx emphasizes that the flourishing of individuals depends upon their circumstances. He writes that if "the circumstances in which the individual lives allow him only the [one]-sided development of one quality at the expense of all the rest, [if] they give him the material and time to develop only that one quality, then this individual achieves only a one-sided, crippled development," and no "moral preaching avails here" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 262; brackets in original). Individuals whose circumstances have left them narrow-minded or antisocial cannot be prompted, even by moral demands, to be anything other than what they are.

Unlike on his earlier theory, however, Marx does not now, in turn, explain the unhappy state of the economy in terms of the as-yet-estranged nature of the human being (cf. §4.41). Here the economic facts are treated as the ultimate determinants of individual flourishing. Marx retains the term "estrangement" to describe the condition of these one-sided individuals, though he deploys it now in scare quotes, and jokes that he is only "us[ing] a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 48). Thus, here it is economic facts that explain the estranged condition of the individuals, not the estrangement of man that explains the state of the economy.

35. Likewise, Marx's mature anthropology is communist. Marx holds that, on a long enough timeline, the development of the productive forces will eventually lead to the collapse of the capitalist form of intercourse, and its replacement by communism. Unlike on his early anthropology, however, Marx no longer treats communism as "an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust" (49; brackets in original), nor does he construe it as "the plan or the destiny of previous generations" (81), conscious or unconscious, to produce communism. Thus, Marx no longer

defines the human being as the communism-seeking animal. Instead, he frames his reflections on the expected emergence of communism just as hypotheses, informed by his diachronic principle.

Given Marx's mature ethnological productionism, however, it remains the case that workers contributing to the production of the means of subsistence under the current mode of production are both (i) producing our entire existing form of life, including all of the cultural manifestations of life; and (ii) helping to bring about those changes to our form of life that will eventuate once the reserve of productive forces is brought into disequilibrium with the existing form of intercourse. In this latter sense, those working today are unwittingly contributing, in piecemeal fashion, just by their productive activity, to bringing communism about. Marx refers to communism as "the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things" (49). It is the projected impact of a process already underway—a process to whose realization we all contribute.

36. So too, Marx's mature anthropology remains naturalistic. Unlike the early anthropology, however, it no longer relies on a speculative metaphysics of nature, according to which universal history is the slow process of nature becoming man. In fact—as I will show in the final part of this chapter—Marx now expressly disavows theories of the kind. Marx's mature naturalism is a scientific naturalism: he holds that we should study the ethnological facts (i.e. the "manifestations of life") in scientific style, explaining them in terms of underlying practical relations. Thus, he characterizes his mature R-framework as "positive science" (37): it is naturalistic in the same sense that every other first-order, empirical, descriptive-explanatory theory is naturalistic.

Note that features of Marx's early emergentism are reproduced, on Exculpatory Naturalism, as regulative ideals for science. Thus, I have argued that Marx holds to a vision of the unity of science on which less fundamental object domains, such as those of the social sciences,

emerge historically from more fundamental object domains, such as those of the natural sciences. This intertheoretic relation describes a pattern of emergence. Nevertheless, Marx's mature R-framework includes no first-order commitment to an emergentist metaphysics of the sort described in Ch. 3 (cf. §4.26). He holds, now, that arriving at a tenable "dynamic concept of nature" is impossible "without the material furnished by empirical natural science" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 139). Thus, he rejects first-order metaphysical naturalism in favor of methodological naturalism.

37. Marx arrives at his mature R-framework by the procedure he refers to as "abstraction," which I have identified as abductive inference (§6.22). Thus, he refers to the concepts that figure in his R-framework as "abstractions," proposes to "illustrate them by historical examples," and distinguishes them from the bad abstractions employed by his rivals (Marx and Engels 1975c: 37).

Thus, Marx is no longer bound to derive his candidate R-framework from a single predecessor, by explicative inference, as he is on Genetico-Critical Explication (cf. §4.70). He is able to draw upon a wide variety of works in the formation of his mature theory (e.g. Hegel's writings on history, Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England* and "Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy," the writings of the classical political economists, and the writings of mainstream historians like Leopold von Ranke). He draws freely upon these influences as models or heuristics—but arrives at his own framework through an exercise in imagination. His R-framework bears traces of this influence, but does not stand in discursive continuity with any of its predecessors. Marx's framework is not an extension, for instance, of Hegel's theory of history.

38. Certain claims Marx makes in *The German Ideology* seem to be drawn directly from the pages of the *1844 Manuscripts*. He claims, for instance, that, through the division of labor, "man's own

deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 47). Compare this to Marx’s claim, in the *Manuscripts*, that “the worker [relates] to his own activity as an alien activity not belonging to him,” or “as an activity which is turned against him” (1975a: 275) Likewise, compare the claim of *The German Ideology*, that, under private property, “material life appears as the end, and what produces this material life, labour ... as the means” (1975c: 87) with the claim of the *1844 Manuscripts* that, under private property, “*life activity, productive life* itself, appears to man in the first place merely as a *means* of satisfying a need—the need to maintain physical existence” (1975a: 276).

39. I have shown that Marx’s mature R-framework differs from his earlier one on various points of substance. It contains a host of new concepts (e.g. <productive forces> and <form of intercourse>), certain concepts are omitted (e.g. <nature becoming man>), and the relations between concepts are changed (e.g. <economic relations> stands in the relation of explanatory priority to <estrangement>, rather than the reverse). On Marx’s holism (cf. §6.9), the content of a concept is determined by the relations it stands in to other concepts in its framework. One upshot of this is that no single concept is shared between Marx’s earlier and later R-frameworks.

Sentences in *The German Ideology* must be read against the mature R-framework, while sentences in the *1844 Manuscripts* must be read against the early R-framework. Suppose that some sentence S appears verbatim in both the *Manuscripts* and *The German Ideology*. It follows from the above that S will nevertheless mean something different (i.e. its concepts will stand in measurably different relational nexi) on Marx’s early R-framework and his mature R-framework. Moreover, since Marx does not propose to derive his mature R-framework from his earlier one by

explicative inference, or by any other necessary derivation procedure, the sentence S, as it figures in *The German Ideology*, cannot be said to be discursively continuous with S in the *Manuscripts*.

40. My proposal is this: just as Marx draws upon the writings of Hegel, Engels, Smith, and Ranke in his abduction to his ethnological productionism, he also draws upon his own early writings. That is, he treats his own earlier candidate R-framework as a heuristic or model for his mature R-framework. Thus, Marx's mature anthropology stands in heuristic, but not discursive continuity to his early anthropology. The mature theory cannot be understood as a simple extension of the earlier one: it differs in all of its particulars, and fails of discursive continuity. At the same time, Marx could not have arrived at his mature theory without relying on the earlier framework as a model.

41. By adopting Exculpatory Naturalism, dropping the requirement that he derive his R-framework from a single A-framework, Marx frees himself to draw freely upon influences elsewhere in philosophy and the sciences. This is especially evident in his later *Ethnological Notebooks*, where he records his reflections on the writings of early evolutionist anthropologists like John Lubbock and Lewis Henry Morgan, among others (cf. Marx 1974). These reflections, written in 1880-82, prove that Marx remains committed to his ethnological productionism through the end of his life.⁶

In the methodological introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx reproduces—though only in outline—the basic structure of his ethnological productionism (cf. Marx 1986a: 45-46). He also

⁶ Engels goes on to write *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* in light of Marx's *Ethnological Notebooks* (cf. Engels 1990: 129-276). This inspires a short-lived tradition of Marxist ethnology among contributors to the Second International (cf. Lafargue 1891; Kautsky 1918). Through his ethnological productionism, Marx enters into connection not just with the early evolutionist anthropologists, like Lubbock (1865), L.H. Morgan (1877), and Tylor (1892), but also with more recent contributors to the social-evolutionist program in anthropology, such as White (1949), T.G. Harding et al. (1960), Steward (1972), and Harris (1979). There are a handful of Marxists still committed to versions of ethnological productionism See especially Cockshott (2019).

attaches a qualification to the theory, noting that the relation between the forces of production and form of intercourse is “a dialectic whose limits have to be defined and which does not abolish real difference” (46).⁷ This, however, is best understood as a qualification against the simplified statement of Marx’s theory in his later writings, such as the 1859 Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (cf. Marx 1986b: 263), in favor of the earlier, more detailed formulations of *The German Ideology*. Marx’s ethnological productionism is the core of his work.

7.2. Appearances and Ideology

42. In *The German Ideology*, Marx is especially interested to explain why particular ideas come to preponderance. Thus, he attends more closely here than elsewhere to the specifically intellectual manifestations of life. From this emerges his theory of ideology. Marx explains his special attention to intellectual factors in his later account of the purpose of *The German Ideology*. He records that, in writing *The German Ideology*, he and Engels intend to “set forth together [their] conception as opposed to the ideological one of German philosophy,” thus to “settle accounts with [their] former philosophical conscience” (264). Marx’s aim is to develop an R-framework capable in principle of supporting genetic exculpations of the A-framework assumptions popular among his philosophical rivals. This requires an empirical theory of the origin of ideas.

43. There are two basic interpretations of Marx’s theory of ideology: the evaluative interpretation, and the descriptive interpretation. Proponents of the evaluative interpretation hold that describing

⁷ Note that, in this same passage, Marx announces his intention to distinguish his own materialistic approach to ethnology with what he calls “naturalistic materialism” (Marx 1986a: 46). Here, he likely refers to the scientific materialism of Ludwig Büchner, Jacob Moleschott, and Carl Vogt, as well as that of Ernst Haeckel. To be a naturalist in the sense that these figures are naturalists is to suppose that all social facts are explainable in terms of facts proper to the natural sciences. Marx is no naturalist in this sense. He is, though, a naturalist in the sense that he takes the methods of the sciences—especially appeal to the so-called “secondary causes” (cf. §3.29)—to have important applications in philosophy. Marx’s aversion to naturalism of the former sort bears not at all on my claim.

some framework or representation as ideological is to say that it is false or inadequate. Thus, Michael Forster writes that, for Marx, ideological beliefs “posit entities, conditions, processes, and so on that do not in fact occur” (Forster 2015: 811). Proponents of the descriptive interpretation hold, by contrast, that to describe some framework or representation as ideology is just to locate it in a broader network of practical relations. Thus, Joseph McCarney claims that “ideology is to be distinguished just in terms of its function in the class struggle and ... other considerations [such as truth and falsehood] are irrelevant to the definition” (McCarney 1980: 79).

Those who take the descriptive view tend to think that Marx himself defends an ideology, while those who take the evaluative view tend to think that Marx distinguishes his own candidate R-framework from the ideological frameworks of those he criticizes. It is my view that the evaluative and descriptive interpretations of Marx’s theory of ideology both embody partial truths.

44. Proponents of the evaluative interpretation are right to treat falsehood or inadequacy as characteristic of ideological representation. Marx writes that “almost the whole ideology amounts either to a distorted conception of ... [universal] history or to a complete abstraction from it” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 29; crossed out). Moreover, he claims that “[i]f in all ideology men and their relations appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process” (36). Here, Marx employs his familiar metaphor of inversion (cf. §§3.59-64) to refer to framework inadequacy. His claim, therefore, is that the ideological frameworks are always inadequate, where this inadequacy is explainable in terms of the (R-framework) facts of history.

Marx nowhere characterizes his own R-framework as ideology. Moreover, he expressly identifies ideology with illusion and unreality, charging Stirner, for instance, with “mistak[ing] the

juridical, ideological expression of bourgeois property for actual bourgeois property” and failing to grasp why “reality will not correspond to this illusion of his” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 353).

45. The idea that Marx himself defends an ideology stems not from Marx himself, but from Lenin. In his *What Is To Be Done?*, Lenin claims that Marx’s “socialism” is itself an ideology, in competition with “bourgeois ideology,” such that “to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology” (Lenin 1960: 384). This likely owes to the influence on Lenin of Vilfredo Pareto’s theory of “non-rational conduct” (cf. Pareto 1935), according to which the ideas we accept are manifestations and rationalizations of our non-rational sentiments—including our desire to see all of our interests met.

46. Proponents of the descriptive interpretation are right, however, to suppose that Marx’s concept of <ideology> first arises not in an evaluative context, but in an explanatory context. The theory of ideology is part of Marx’s mature ethnological productionism. Its purpose is not just to undermine certain beliefs as (say) formed by the wrong processes, or fixed by the wrong methods, but to integrate those beliefs into a broader causal-explanatory theory of the ethnological facts.

Now, Marx does go on to employ his theory of ideology to critical ends: he develops a number of genetic exculpations of rival views with the help of his theory of ideology. I will discuss some of these uses in later parts of this chapter. Recall, however, that on Exculpatory Naturalism, we frame our genetic exculpations of rival frameworks in terms of the R-framework explanatory-descriptive vocabularies we ourselves propose to defend (cf. §6.52). The function of the concept <ideology> is not to pick out just any framework shown inadequate by genetic exculpation in the evaluative context of criticism. It is, rather, a descriptive concept in a definite empirical theory.

47. The theory of ideology, therefore, is Marx's ethnological productionist theory of the intellectual manifestations of life. As with the other ethnological facts, Marx holds that the study of ideas belongs first to the natural sciences. He claims, first, that "'mind' is from the outset afflicted with the curse of being 'burdened' with matter, ... in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 44). Thus, mind begins as language. It takes as causal prerequisites "the real individual, his speech organs, a definite stage of physical development, an existing language and dialects, ears capable of hearing and a human environment from which it is possible to hear something" (150). All of these belong to the natural sciences.

Marx holds that language arises, however, "from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men" (44). Thus, language is among the first productive forces available to human individuals—second only to sheer labor power, perhaps—and also gives rise to the first form of intercourse: in its earliest stages, the consciousness that comes with language is a "man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him" (44). The emergence of language and mind gives rise immediately to social relations between individuals.

48. In giving rise to social relations, language and mind also come under the determination of social factors, and thus become proper objects of the social sciences. In line with his ethnological productionism, Marx claims that our ideas come to be shaped, like all other manifestations of life, by patterns of production. There are two factors to consider in this connection: the constitution of concepts (i.e. the selection of particular concepts or frameworks); and the dissemination of concepts (i.e. their coming to preponderance among particular groups of individuals). I will discuss the constitution of concepts in this part of the chapter, and turn to their dissemination in the next.

49. Marx claims that, early in its development, “[t]he production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is ... directly woven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men” (36). At this stage, our concepts simply embody “consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things” (44). Marx holds that the concepts individuals arrive at naturally (i.e. through untutored or spontaneous concept formation) just function to coordinate their behavior, both with the demands of the natural environment, and with the needs of other individuals.

Thus, by default, our concepts describe things in such a way as allows basic forms of practical coordination. Note that this does not mean that these concepts describe reality in such a way as satisfies Marx’s practical criterion on knowledge (cf. §6.49). Rather, spontaneously formed concepts provide us with the means to navigate the existing manifestations of life much as a mouse navigates a maze: they do not account for why things are as they are, nor how we might change them if necessary; but they provide us with the cognitive resources we need to keep ourselves alive (where it is possible) within the existing order. Thus, they attain a minimum of practicality.

50. These minimally practical, spontaneously formed concepts just are the appearances (cf. §§3.43, 6.83). As the forces of production develop, and the form of intercourse shifts accordingly, all of the manifestations of life undergo change. This gives rise, in turn, to new appearances. In periods of equilibrium, there will be direct correspondence between the productive forces and the form of intercourse, between these factors taken together and the manifestations of life, and thus between these factors taken together and the appearances. The appearances determine our thinking by defining common sense: when we are not vigilant, our thinking is drawn back to the appearances.

This is what Marx means when he writes that “[m]en are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., that is, real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 36). This is the ethnological productionist theory of ideas: individuals produce their manifestations of life according to current patterns of production, and these manifestations of life, in turn, fix the framework of appearances. Thinking informed by these appearances is itself shaped by production.

51. Marx claims that the appearances play a role in shaping even “the language of the politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people” (36). These are the areas of thinking typically classified as “ideological.” Marx holds, therefore, that most (at least) of the frameworks we find on offer in the legal, moral, religious, and metaphysical domains will reflect the appearances, and therefore be false or inadequate. What does it mean to say that these frameworks are inadequate? It means that they do not satisfy Marx’s practical criterion for framework adequacy: in reflecting the appearances, they fail to identify the causal structures that determine outcomes in our environment; thus they fail to punch through the appearances and explain them.

52. Note, however, that these ideological frameworks will always attain, at least, to the minimal practicality condition discussed just above. That is, ideological frameworks will always be practical enough in their relationship to reality to allow those who accept them to navigate the physical environment, to feed themselves when food is available, and so on (cf. Sayer 1979: 8; Torrance 1995: 44-49). This is guaranteed in two ways. First, the appearances are reflections of the immediate practical features of the manifestations of life. There is no reason that they should be fundamentally misleading, just that they should be explanatorily superficial, representing only

the superficial features of things. Second, frameworks so misleading as to make basic self-maintenance impossible will not survive long in practice: their advocates will literally die away.

53. My reconstruction of the theory of ideology in terms of appearances is supported by Marx's choice of the term "ideology." Since Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, there has been a standard story about the origin of the term. It emerges first as an approbative label: Destutt de Tracy and others refer to their Locke-inspired system for reducing concepts to psychological foundations as "ideology." As Mannheim writes, however, the contemporary, pejorative sense of the term emerges "when Napoleon, finding that this group of philosophers [has been] opposing his imperial ambitions, contemptuously label[s] them 'ideologists'" (Mannheim 1979 [1935]: 72).

This story has been repeated by nearly every writer on the topic (cf. Barth 1976 [1945]: 1-37, 48-49; Bell 1960: 395; Lichtheim 1965; Kennedy 1979; Carver 1988; McLellan 1995: Ch. 1; Rosen 1996: 169-73; Pines 1993: Chs. 1-2). It is a fairly weak story, however: it says nothing about how Marx or Engels come to favor the term themselves, nor even how they come to adopt Napoleon's pejorative use of the term. It is surprising that it has passed so long as satisfactory.

54. There is, however, a more proximal explanation of Marx's choice of the term "ideology." We find it in Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. In a brief aside, Hegel introduces

what the French call 'ideology.' It is nothing else but logic, ontology, and abstract metaphysics, namely, the enumeration and analysis of the simplest thought-determinations. They are not handled dialectically and are not investigated according to their sources. Instead the stuff is taken from our reflection, from our thought and representation, and it is analyzed minutely and its furthest determinations exhibited (Hegel 1990: 212).

Hegel's claim is that the French ideologists simply take up concepts they find already preponderant in "our thought and representation," and subject them to analysis, drawing out their "furthest

determinations.” Their error, therefore, is that they begin by taking the appearances for granted rather than subjecting them to critical scrutiny, investigating them “according to their sources.”

55. It is typical of Marx that he turns this passage, which he finds in Hegel, against both Hegel and his epigones.⁸ Thus, Marx characterizes “ideologists,” along with “school-masters” and “students,” as among “the estates privileged to cherish illusions” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 196), and claims that “[t]he Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly ‘world-shattering’ phrases, are the staunchest conservatives” (30) when it comes to the appearances. By his choice of title, Marx seeks to communicate that the Germans are no better than the French, in that they too fail to investigate their concepts according to their sources, and thus fall into the trap of ideology.

56. Marx’s theory of ideology, therefore, is that component of his mature R-framework devoted to explaining the trend of ideas in terms of the trend of appearances. Thus, Marx treats both appearances and ideas as manifestations of life. This theory has evaluative consequences: to say that a given concept or framework is ideological is to say that it is inadequate or false. However, the principal function of the concept <ideology> is to locate ideas of a certain sort into an empirical theory of human activity. Both the evaluative and the descriptive interpretations of Marx’s theory of ideology, therefore, embody partial truths.

57. It is important to recall, however, that not all concepts or frameworks are ideological. The concept <ideology> is not equal in extension to <thought> or <discourse>. Thus, Marx’s theory

⁸ There is no difficulty in establishing Marx’s familiarity with Hegel’s lectures. They were first published by Carl Ludwig Mechelet in 1833, with a second edition appearing in 1840-42. Marx references the lectures explicitly in *The German Ideology* and elsewhere (cf. Marx and Engels 1975b: 131; 1975c: 147, 153, 168, 170-74).

of ideology does not deny that individual inquirers, or communities of inquirers, can rely on methods like abduction to pierce through the appearances and arrive at candidate R-frameworks capable of explaining how the appearances arise in the first place. In fact, Marx's theory of ideology (which assumes his broader ethnological productionism) just is such a framework.

If we were to deny this possibility, we would run into a problem: the so-called “paradox of ideology” (cf. T. McCarthy 1979; Elster 1985: 475-76; Schwartz 1993; Dallman and Leiter 2020: 91-92). On this paradox, all concepts are ideological, and we cannot trust any of them—even those in terms of which the theory of ideology itself is expressed. This paradox bears similarities both to the self-refutation problem for global conceptual relativism (cf. Hales 2020), and to the problems concomitant to “All propositions are false,” which entails its contradictory. Luckily, the paradox of ideology never arises for Marx, as he does not claim that all concepts reflect the appearances.

7.3. Interest Explanations, Idealism, and the Myth of Creation

58. To say that some claim or concept is ideological is also to say that it is positional (i.e. that it reflects the interests of some subset in the division of labor). Thus, Marx writes, in *The Communist Manifesto*, that ideological domains like “[l]aw, morality, [and] religion are ... so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests” (Marx and Engels 1976: 495). If ideological frameworks are just those frameworks whose concepts reflect the appearances given rise to by the prevailing mode of production, however, it is not obvious what role positional interests can play in shaping or giving rise to them.

59. Establishing that a concept or framework reflects the interests of some group requires first determining what those interests are. Marx takes this to be straightforward. He writes that “[t]he

fixation of interests through the division of labour is far more obvious than the fixation of ‘desires’ or ‘thoughts’” (1975c: 259). In particular, he holds that individuals occupying winning positions in the division of labor will prefer to see the existing form of intercourse retained, while individuals occupying losing positions will prefer to see that form modified. Thus, he writes that individuals in bourgeois class positions will be “interested in maintaining the present state of production” (52 fn), while proletarians will be interested to “overthrow the entire bourgeois system” (290).

Note that, on Marx’s story, interests and desires come apart. It may be in my interest, as an academic, to see existing relations persist, but I may not actively desire this outcome. Marx has no worked-out moral psychology. This is what he means, however, in claiming that interests are more easily fixed than thoughts or desires. As individuals, it may not be in the personal interest of some proletarians to overthrow existing relations: they may suffer during the transition. Marx holds, however, that as “average individuals” (80)—that is, as representatives of a given class position—it is in their interest. Thus, though easy to determine, interest sets may nevertheless be complex. It may be impossible, for instance, to jointly satisfy one’s personal interests and one’s class interests.

60. To this, Marx adds the following observation about appearances: the appearances, on any given form of intercourse, will tend always to suggest the permanence of the practical relations that give rise to them. That is, the appearances tend to misrepresent what are in fact transient states of dynamic systems as “given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same” (39). Thus, Marx claims that “[i]n an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for domination and where, therefore, domination is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an ‘eternal law’” (59).

This idea is present already in Kant. He claims in the *Anthropology* Pillau, for instance, that it is difficult to define <human being> because “the appearances in different ages do not show how the human being is constituted, but only how he will be constituted at the time and under these circumstances” (Kant 2012: 273). Thus, Kant warns that “we cannot say that [the human being] will constantly remain as it now is,” for “that is just as if the ancients had said that it will remain for all times as it was in their time; for the condition now is entirely unlike the ancient one” (273).

61. At each stage in the development of the productive forces, the appearances will reflect the interests of those in winning positions relative to the existing division of labor. Why? Because (i) the appearances tend always to suggest that existing relations will be retained; and (ii) it is always in the interest of those on the winning side of the division of labor to see existing relations retained.

Thus, Marx claims that “[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas”, and specifies that “[t]he ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, ... hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 59). Marx fails to make fully clear only that this “ideal expression” is shaped by the appearances: it is an illusory description of practical relations correctly describable only by Marx’s R-framework, and whose illusory status follows on its reflecting the corresponding appearances.

62. Thus, the appearances tend to suggest that existing conditions, which favor the interests of the ruling class, will be in place forever. Ideological frameworks reflect these appearances. This is the sense in which ideology reflects positional interests. This account raises a further question, however. We usually think of ideology in the context of ideological disagreement. Thus, Marx will later characterize the “ideological forms” as venues in which individuals with competing interests

“become conscious of this conflict and fight it out” (Marx 1986b: 263). The present account, however, seems to suggest that, at any one time, there will only be one preponderant ideological framework: whichever framework reflects the appearances given rise to by prevailing relations.

63. In periods of equilibrium, in which the form of intercourse corresponds directly to the current stage in the development of the productive forces, individuals at all positions in the division of labor will, on average, arrive at concepts reflecting the interests of the ruling class. Why? Because under these conditions, all of the appearances are manifestations of life arising from the same form of intercourse. In a state of perfect equilibrium, no competing form of intercourse intercedes.

Under conditions of disequilibrium, however, when the productive forces have been developed beyond the point appropriate for the prevailing form of intercourse, we will encounter two sets of appearances: those corresponding to the previous stage in the development of the productive forces, and thus to the descending form of intercourse; and those corresponding to the next stage in the development of the productive forces, and thus to a nascent, ascending form of intercourse. In the late days of the feudal form of intercourse, for instance, those living in cities among wealthy merchants will have been inundated by appearances typical of the subsequent, capitalist form of intercourse. These appearances, and those generated by the feudal form of intercourse, represent the interests of different classes: namely, the ascending bourgeoisie, and the descending nobility. Thus, under conditions of disequilibrium, we find competing ideologies.

64. Marx holds, however, that even in conditions of disequilibrium, one competing ideological framework will, in general, win out over the others. Settling why this is requires that we turn, finally, to questions about the dissemination of ideas, rather than just their constitution (cf. §7.48).

First, let us make sense of conflicting appearances as issues of conflicting evidence: some of the evidence, in the circumstance just described, supports conjecture A (corresponding to the interests of a descending class), while some other share of the evidence supports conjecture B (corresponding to the interests of an ascending class). Individuals occupying different positions in the division of labor will be confronted by different appearances, and will thus have access to different evidence. They will, accordingly, enter into disagreements which are not faultless, but which are explainable in terms of the participants' respective standpoints in the division of labor.

65. Average observers will rely upon their own good judgment to adjudicate between competing frameworks. They will tend, therefore, to favor frameworks that reflect whatever appearances happen to present to them, given their position. This is true not just of those on the losing side of the division of labor (i.e. "the man on the street"), but also of those on the winning side. Thus, Marx writes that individuals in the ruling class "possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think," and that, just as their interests "determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch," they "rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 59).

Among the individuals on the winning side of the division of labor, there are what Marx calls the "active, conceptive ideologists, who make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood" (60). Under earlier forms of intercourse, these individuals may have been tribal elders or priests. Under the capitalist form of intercourse, they are academics, politicians, journalists, and media producers. Like all observers, their attitudes are shaped by the evidence to which they are exposed. Unlike other observers, the opinions they arrive at will tend to be received, in subsequent epochs, as part of the official record of the time in which they live.

66. It follows that, under conditions of disequilibrium, which appearances come to be reflected in the official, preponderant ideology of the day is decided, in large part, by which class controls “the means of mental production” (59) or “the means of intellectual production” (51). Note that this control will not settle all ideological disputes. Even where a definite ideological framework is forced upon individuals through state oppression, countervailing frameworks will continue to strike certain of those oppressed as manifestly the more adequate to the appearances.

Likewise, those in the ideological profession play the role of experts, helping to settle disagreements in the interpretation of appearances among non-experts. Individuals persuaded by countervailing appearances, however, will generally not be inclined to defer to experts who deny those appearances outright. They are more likely to seek out minority opinions among the experts, deferring only to those who recognize roughly the same appearances as evidence. Control over dissemination corresponds to widespread agreement with the ideas disseminated, therefore, only because (i) the appearances that present to those in the ideological professions tend also to present to large swathes of the population; and (ii) the opinions of these experts tend to be recorded for posterity, so can be found, e.g., in books; ordinary opinions, by contrast, are spoken and forgotten.

67. I have observed that, on Marx’s mature R-framework, different individuals will encounter different appearances, just in virtue of their position in the division of labor. This means not just that bourgeois and proletarian, but also male and female, rural and urban positions will help select the appearances an individual encounters. Some readers of Marx have supposed that this puts certain observers, just in virtue of their position, nearer to the truth (cf. Lukács 1968b: 159-72; S. Harding 2008: 115). The relevant difference between bourgeois and proletarian, male and female

positions, however, is simply the difference between two sets of misleading appearances. Thus, Marx places no observer, proletarian or otherwise, nearer to the truth just in virtue of position.

68. It is plausible that arriving at a totally adequate R-framework will require something like an exhaustive inventory of the appearances to be explained away. Thus, it will be necessary to explain away not just the appearances that present to (say) male bourgeois observers, but also those that present to (say) female proletarian observers. Marx will later write, in the *Grundrisse*, that “science” presupposes “observation in all directions, which can only be the work of many heads” (Marx 1986a: 527). As discussed in Ch. 6 (cf. §6.31), Marx takes some inquirers to be better positioned for far-reaching abductions than others, in part because of their exposure to a broader set of appearances. Arriving at the truth, however, always requires subverting these appearances.

69. Under disequilibrium, therefore, we should expect disagreement between individuals, explainable in terms of their exposure to different appearances. Under equilibrium, however, we should expect perfect consensus, save on questions of how exactly the appearances are to be accommodated at framework level. In practice, however, we never encounter widespread agreement of this sort. This brings out an important qualification to my earlier reconstruction of Marx’s ethnological productionism: perfect equilibrium between productive forces and form of intercourse is never attained in practice, at least outside of communism; the equilibrium state is an idealization which helps elucidate the structure and dynamics of a system that in fact persists in a constant state of disequilibrium.⁹ Thus, disagreement is standard where ideology is concerned.

⁹ My reconstruction involves another, more significant idealization or simplification, which is present also on Marx’s original presentation. Development in the productive forces is uneven, and full transitions in the form of intercourse often depend on multiple areas of industry having undergone change. As a result, some sectors of the economy may advance more quickly than others, such that we find multiple forms of intercourse competing even

70. My reconstruction of Marx's concept of <ideology> is fairly forgiving to those in the so-called "ideological professions." It treats their distortions as no more suspect, in principle, than the illusions ordinary observers form in the course of their lives, explaining the cultural preponderance of their opinions just in terms of their relative position in the division of labor. This contrasts with the story according to which ideologists are active manipulators, responsible for keeping entire populations suppressed. This latter view is typical of Enlightenment critics of Christianity. Thus, Jean Meslier writes that "[i]t is necessary to the priests that we tremble before their God, in order that we have recourse to them," adding that the priests "devour nations, debase souls, discourage industry, and sow discord under the pretext of the glory of their God" (Meslier 1910: 212).

71. Marx denies that ideology functions in this way. In fact, one of Marx's central aims in *The German Ideology* is to argue against the idea that "ideas create[] the various conditions of life and thus the wholesale manufacturers of these ideas, i.e., the ideologists, have dominated the world" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 420). This is one of the theories given rise to by the analogical model Marx criticizes under the title "the myth of creation" (cf. §5.17). Recall that the myth of creation rests on the image of the world coming into being from the mind of a creator God. What is key, in

within a single mode of production, with manifestations of life (e.g. institutions and practices) corresponding to each form competing in the culture. Thus, Marx writes, of growth in the productive forces, that

[s]ince this development takes place spontaneously, i.e. is not subordinated to a general plan of freely combined individuals, it proceeds from various localities, tribes, nations, branches of labour, etc., each of which to start with develops independently of the others and only gradually enters into relation with the others. Furthermore, this development proceeds only very slowly; the various stages and interests are never completely overcome, but only subordinated to the prevailing interest and trail along beside the latter for centuries afterward. It follows from this that even within a nation the individuals, even apart from their pecuniary circumstances, have quite diverse developments, and that an earlier interest, the peculiar form of intercourse of which has already been ousted by that belonging to a later interest, remains for a long time afterwards in possession of a traditional power in the illusory community (state, law), which has won an existence independent of the individuals" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 83).

Marx maintains that the general trend described on his ethnological productionism holds despite these qualifications.

the image, is that the material world is given rise to by something non-material (i.e. an idea). Marx targets theories that rely on this model in their explanations of the events of universal history.

In particular, on my reconstruction, Marx holds that theories informed by the myth of creation tend to be unpractical (cf. §5.18), in the sense that they fail to identify the real practical relations that account for their target *explananda* (cf. §6.51). This is a case where Marx's judgment that certain explanations are bad turns not just on their failure to cohere with his own R-framework, but also on their formal properties (cf. §6.13). As I will argue, Marx holds that the myth of creation tends to give rise to theories that fail to specify how their *explanantia* relate to their *explananda*. Marx does suppose, however, that frameworks given rise to by the myth of creation will tend also to fall afoul of his views concerning the order of explanatory priority between material factors (e.g. patterns of production) and non-material factors (e.g. the contents of our concepts) in history.

72. Since it is an analogical model, and not a worked-out theory, the myth of creation plays a role in shaping a wide variety of conceptual frameworks. It follows that Marx cannot give a knockdown argument against the model itself (cf. §5.48). He can only promise to examine and criticize a variety of theories given rise to by the model, and then infer, at the level of the model, a tendency to give rise to theories possessing the errors identified at the level of individual frameworks. Marx refers to these frameworks, despite their many differences, as so many instances of "idealism."

This explains the apparent polysemy of Marx's concept of <idealism>, which picks out, by turns, the mistake of construing "politics" as a sphere that "develops in its own way" independent of production (Marx and Engels 1975c: 468), the mistake of approaching history as a series of "spectacular historical events" (50), the mistake of treating the "very latest result [of history] as the 'task' which 'in truth originally it set itself,'" (146), and the mistake of supposing that the

responsibility for my suffering lies with me, such that I must “change myself in myself” (212) to see better results. What these mistakes have in common is their reliance on the myth of creation.

73. As in the case of the philosopher’s stone (cf. §§5.41-44), Marx likely bases his understanding of the myth of creation on certain of Feuerbach’s reflections in *The Essence of Christianity*. According to Feuerbach, belief in divine creation just is belief in miracles—for it presupposes God’s ability to intervene directly in nature. Thus, “[t]he creation is an immediate act of God, a miracle, for there was once nothing but God” (Feuerbach 1989: 192). This same power of direct intervention is presupposed by prayer. Feuerbach claims that the religious individual “has recourse to prayer in the certainty that he can do more, infinitely more, by prayer, than by all the efforts of reason and all the agencies of Nature” (193). Through prayer, the believer hopes to guide or influence God’s power of intervention in the natural world. Thus, God is taken to intervene in the world in order to satisfy the practical needs of individual believers. Feuerbach claims, accordingly, that “the conception of the world which is essential to religion is that of the practical or subjective viewpoint” (195). God creates and intervenes in the world to bring about definite practical ends.

In line with Feuerbach’s diagnosis, Marx claims that “[a]ll idealists, philosophic and religious, ancient and modern, believe in inspirations, in revelations, saviours, miracle-workers,” and that “whether their belief takes a crude, religious, or a refined, philosophic, form depends only on their cultural level” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 532). Thus, to formulate a framework in accord with the myth of creation is to somehow repurpose the idea of prayer or creation as the miraculous intervention of an outside power in nature. It is not yet clear, however, how this poses a problem.

74. Feuerbach identifies a problem for the conception of God as a creative power: the explanations of natural phenomena it provides are vacuous. Suppose that the believer is in crisis; he prays to God to intervene and set things right. What exactly does he take himself to be asking for? He cannot have in mind any particular mechanism or secondary cause by which God will intervene (cf. §3.29). As Feuerbach writes, the “second causes are nothing to [the believer] when he prays,” for “if they were anything to him, the might, the fervour of prayer would be annihilated” (Feuerbach 1989: 193). It is essential, in fact, to the sorts of explanations we find at work in frameworks informed by the myth of creation that they do not specify undergirding mechanisms.

Suppose, then, that the believer prays that it be the case that P. How does he explain the possible efficacy of his procedure? He holds that it will be the case that P just in case God wills that P. His explanation, therefore, provides us with no new information: it simply repeats the *explanandum* term P in the *explanans* position, and fails to specify any mechanism to support the explanation. Similarly, Feuerbach claims that when the believer explains, in terms of God’s powers, why the world has come to be how it is, “he merely repeats what he has already said [i.e., about the world] in another form [i.e., as the intention of God]” (191). We learn nothing new. Thus, Feuerbach concludes that “[a]ll religious speculative cosmogony is tautology” (191).

75. As I reconstruct it, the myth of creation enjoins explaining real-world states of affairs in terms of the concepts that describe those states of affairs. This form of explanation corresponds to God’s creation of the world. The pattern can be extended, however, to explain changes to real-world states of affairs in terms of changes that occur at the level of description. This corresponds to mythic belief in the causal efficacy of prayer, which is miraculous in the same sense as creation.

Marx's criticism of the philosopher's stone targets the same cognitive conservatism (cf. §5.20) that his earlier Accommodation Argument targets (cf. §2.3): the conservative retention of conceptual contents across criticisms. Likewise, Marx's criticism of the myth of creation targets the same practical conservatism (cf. §5.18) that his early argument for the practical irrelevance of Rational Explication targets (cf. §2.2): the false supposition that transforming our representations of the world will transform the world itself. Marx's criticism of cognitive conservatism targets a sort of inadvertent tautological thinking: the reproduction of identical contents on either side of a logical operation (cf. §2.54). Likewise, Marx's criticism of practical conservatism targets inadvertent tautological thinking: the attempt to explain events just in terms of their descriptions.

76. Thus, Marx mocks Bauer for presenting us with “one of the most profound explanations about the state-shattering power of criticism, namely, that ‘criticism and the critics hold *power in their hands*, because’ (a fine ‘because’!) ‘*strength is in their consciousness*,’ and, secondly, that these great manufacturers of history ‘hold power in their hands,’ because they ‘derive power from themselves and from criticism’ (i.e. again from themselves)—whereby it is still, unfortunately, not proven that it is possible to ‘derive’ anything at all from there, from ‘themselves,’ from ‘criticism’” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 109). Bauer's framework turns, crucially, on the myth of creation: it supposes that changes in the world can be explained by the changes we make to our concepts.

77. As I have already suggested (cf. §7.72), Marx takes a wide variety of rival frameworks to show signs of influence by the myth of creation. He subjects each of these to criticism by Exculpatory Naturalism.¹⁰ Out of concern for space, I will focus on just one of these criticisms: Marx's genetic

¹⁰ For Marx's genetic exculpation of the view that politics is an arena independent of production, see Marx and Engels (1975c, pp. 194-98). For his exculpation of the teleological view of history, which I will discuss in

exculpation of the view, introduced just above, that the function of the ideological professions is to control and manipulate the population, deciding social outcomes in favor of the ruling class.

78. On Marx's mature R-framework, history does in fact involve a procession of ideas: as the manifestations of life undergo change, new appearances come to prevail, new classes of individuals come into control of the means of intellectual dissemination, and new ideological frameworks come to preponderance. Marx points out that, if we fail to notice the conditions that give rise to these ideas, it can appear that "during the time the aristocracy was dominant, the concepts honour, loyalty, etc., were dominant, [while] during the dominance of the bourgeoisie the concepts freedom, equality, etc., [were dominant]" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 60). This gives rise to the idea that history just is a procession of ideas—and that concepts shape our lives.

Marx adds that "[t]he ruling class itself on the whole imagines this to be so" (60). The world appears to these individuals as though it were governed by concepts. Why has the world come to be such that it falls under description C? Their answer: because this is a time in which the concept C is dominant. The *explanandum* term C is simply repeated in the position of *explanans*.

79. Marx argues that, once this framework is in view, "one can go back again to the producers of 'the concept', to the theorists, ideologists and philosophers" and conclude that "the philosophers, the thinkers as such, have at all times been dominant in history" (61-62). Those responsible to produce frameworks that reflect the appearances may make this change "[t]o remove the mystical appearance of this 'self-determining concept'" (62). Why, then, does the world fall under the

connection with his exculpation of <man> in the final part of this chapter, see (pp. 88-89, 183-84). Marx's exculpation of the view that the individual creates itself in consciousness is less clear, but see (pp. 52, 378, 419-20).

description C? Because the dominant intellectuals will that it fall under the concept C. Again, the *explanandum* is simply repurposed as an *explanans*. Nothing new is given by way of explanation.

80. Thus, Marx explains the view that the ideologists are “the manufacturers of history” (62) away as an illusion given rise to by misleading appearances. Those who fall prey to the illusion are culpable only insofar as they fail to see through the appearances. In supposing that individual epochs are governed by grand ideas, they “take[] every epoch at its word and believe[] that everything it says and imagines about itself is true” (62). Marx treats the appearances themselves, however, as manifestations of life, explainable in terms of current patterns of production.

Why, though, do the ideologists themselves tend to be especially susceptible to this error? Marx claims that “this is explained perfectly easily from their practical position in life, their job, and the division of labour” (62). First, it is the ideologist’s job to produce concepts. Second, because of their limited perspective on the world under the division of labor (cf. §7.17), individuals tend to exaggerate the importance of their own trade. As Marx puts it, “[e]veryone believes his craft to be the true one” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 92). Thus, though they are not the only ones subject to appearances that suggest the idea, ideologists are especially disposed to imagine that their descriptions of reality, or those of their peers, are in fact responsible for giving rise to reality.

81. Marx holds, therefore, that “ideology” is “only an expression and symptom of [social] relations” (420). He gives a genetic exculpation of the contrasting view, showing that ideologists can be good-faith inquirers while still falling prey to the illusion of the efficacy of their own ideas. For Marx, therefore, the fact that one historical outcome rather than another comes about can never be satisfactorily explained by the fact that individuals possess one concept or framework rather

than another. Where I fall prey to the appearances, this is explainable in terms of patterns of production. Where I employ abduction to arrive at R-frameworks that cut through the appearances and explain them away, this too is explainable in terms of patterns of production (cf. §6.31).

On Marx's conception, the adequacy of a framework is a measure both of its literal descriptive import (i.e. its capacity to describe the practical relations as they actually are), and its practicality (cf. §6.51). It follows that adequate concepts should allow us, in principle, to exercise agency in the world, intervening in the impersonal systems that determine good and bad personal outcomes. However, my possessing these adequate concepts, and thus being in position to act effectively in the world, is itself explainable in terms of patterns of production. Thus despite his practical approach to concept adequacy, Marx makes no room for the idea that facts about my concepts—taken independently of the facts about production—are decisive in explaining history.

82. As Marx will write later on, in the preface to *Capital*, on his mature R-framework, “the evolution of the economic formation is viewed as a process of natural history,” such that, though “he may subjectively raise himself above them,” arriving by abduction at a correct understanding of them, the individual—bourgeois or proletarian—cannot be held “responsible for relations whose creature he socially remains” (Marx 1996: 10). Thus, through his refutation of the view that ideologists manipulate and control populations, Marx exculpates these individuals in a double sense: (i) he shows that, though their self-conception is mistaken, the error involved is explainable in terms of their falling prey to misleading appearances; and (ii) he shows that, though they stand on the winning side of the division of labor, they are not personally responsible for that division.

83. Some critics of Marx suppose that it is simply an empirical datum that concepts play an independent role in history. The criticism takes the form “Marx’s theory fails to account for the role played by ideas in such-and-such historical event.” Thus, it characterizes Marx’s rejection of the efficacy of ideas as a kind of explanatory deficit. This criticism is question-begging. It is no different than charging defenders of the oxygen theory with failing to account for the efficacy of phlogiston, or charging modern biologists with failing to account for *élan vital* or the *Wille zum Leben*.¹¹ Marx does not fail to account for the independent efficacy of concepts; he denies it outright. Engels wavers on this point late in life (cf. Engels 2001: 35-36), but Marx never does.

7.4. Marx’s Mature Exculpation of His Early Anthropology

84. In this concluding part of the chapter, I will argue that Marx employs his mature anthropological R-framework in *The German Ideology* to give a genetic exculpation of the concept of <man> he develops in the *1844 Manuscripts* (i.e. to explain it away as an illusion given rise to by misleading appearances). By demonstrating this, I aim to establish two things. First, I will identify the relation of continuity between the early Marx and the mature Marx, replacing the vague terms of the 20th-century continuity debate with more exact ones. Second, I will draw the discussion of the dissertation to a head, showing that Marx’s mature R-framework stands as a legitimate critical successor, generated by Exculpatory Naturalism, to his earlier R-framework.

¹¹ There may appear to be a disanalogy between the two cases in the fact that, while the concept <phlogiston> is fully eliminated by the oxygen theory, the concept <idea> is retained on Marx’s R-framework. This, however, too quickly identifies the commonsense A-framework concept of <idea> with the concept of <idea> we find on Marx’s framework. On Marx’s definition, ideas just are intellectual manifestations of life, by their nature explainable in terms of the production of life. Strictly speaking, therefore, Marx is an eliminativist about ideas, as they are defined on the commonsense A-framework (cf. §6.71). He proposes to replace the commonsense concept of <idea> by his revised, R-framework concept <intellectual manifestation of life>. This shores up the analogy.

85. I have argued that Marx arrives at this mature R-framework by abduction, drawing upon a variety of sources, including his own earlier R-framework, as heuristics (cf. §§7.37-38). Construed as a theory, this mature framework just consists in Marx's mature ethnological productionism: his explanation of how patterns of production determine all other ethnological facts (e.g. institutions, cultural practices, and intellectual trends). To say that something is a manifestation of life on Marx's framework is to say that it is explainable in terms of patterns of production. I have focused in particular on Marx's claim that commonsense appearances and the ideological frameworks that reflect those appearances are themselves manifestations of life. Thus, I have shown that Marx takes ideological belief to be explainable, in principle, in terms of facts about human production.

Marx devotes special attention to <ideology> in *The German Ideology* because his purpose there is to "settle accounts with [his] former philosophical conscience" (Marx 1986b: 264). Thus, he requires the specific explanatory resources necessary to give a genetic exculpation of his own previous R-framework. Not accidentally, these are the same resources he requires to support his general materialist explanatory program in intellectual history (cf. §6.78). I have argued that Marx's ethnological productionism explains much more than patterns of ideas. Thus, Marx writes that "[i]deology is itself only one of the aspects of ... history" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 29; crossed out).

86. Recall that Marx's earlier framework also puts forward a version of ethnological productionism. It differs in important ways, however, from Marx's mature R-framework. Where the mature framework explains the condition of the individual in terms of their position in the division of labor, thus in terms of economic facts, the earlier framework proposes to explain both the condition of the individual and the economic facts in terms of the human species' progress

toward realizing its true nature (cf. §§4.41, 7.34). This evolution of the species is then embedded in a speculative metaphysics of nature. On the latter story, universal history just is the slow process by which nature becomes man, arriving by emergence at higher and higher levels of complexity (cf. §§4.26, 7.36). Combined with Marx's holism, these differences ramify across entailment relations, with the result that no single concept is wholly shared between frameworks (cf. §7.39).

87. I have argued that Marx presents a strange combination of attitudes where self-criticism is concerned. His commitment to the critical program in philosophy requires that he subject his own views to rational scrutiny. However, he is highly averse to explicit self-criticism. As a result, he tends to criticize his own commitments only when he can attribute them to someone else (cf. §5.11). This aversion holds even for genetic exculpation, which treats the target of criticism as a good-faith inquirer, taking issue only with their susceptibility to objectively misleading appearances. Thus, he presents this exculpation not as a criticism of his own earlier framework, but as a criticism of Feuerbach and Stirner, and the so-called "True Socialists." In the next few sections, I will reconstruct the framework Marx criticizes, showing that it corresponds to his early concept of <man> in each of its core claims. Then I will proceed to Marx's genetic exculpation.

88. Marx characterizes the target of his criticism as follows. He claims that, on this framework, the condition of individuals as they will live under communism is mistaken for an ideal, rather than a simple inevitability given existing economic trends. Thus, these "individuals, who are no longer subject to the division of labour, have been conceived by the philosophers as an ideal, under the name 'man,' so that at every historical stage 'man' [is] substituted for the individuals existing hitherto and shown as the motive force of history" (Marx and Engels 1975c: 88).

Definite stages in the development of the productive forces are thus misconstrued as “evolutionary phases of man” (77). The progress of the species itself is taken to explain the current ethnological facts. Marx notes that, on this view, the “species, independently of control by individuals and the stage of their historical development, brings into the world all physical and spiritual potentialities, the immediate existence of individuals and, in embryo, [the] division of labour” (425).¹² The explanatory primacy of <man> is the central distinguishing feature of Marx’s early anthropological framework, which explains universal history in terms of human evolution.

89. Marx adds that the philosophers conceive of this evolution “as a process of the self-estrangement of ‘man’” (88). Thus, earlier stages in universal history are understood as stages during which the species itself realizes human nature less successfully. These philosophers, however, do not explain the condition of estrangement in terms of underlying patterns of production, as Marx himself does on his mature R-framework. Instead, they propose to explain the undesirable features of the real world in terms of the estranged condition of the human species. Thus, Marx writes that “[instead] of the task of describing [actual] individuals in their [actual] alienation and in the empirical relations of this alienation, ... the setting forth is replaced by the [mere idea] of alienation” (282; brackets in original). This mirrors Marx’s early account of the role played by estrangement in universal history.

¹² Likewise, Marx characterizes the philosophers’ framework as explaining the intellectual manifestations of life in terms of the state of the human species. He writes that “[t]he conceptions and ideas of people, separated from actual things, are bound, of course, to have as their basis not actual individuals, but the individual of the philosophical conception, ... ‘man’ as such, the concept of man” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 293). This formula makes clear, in a way that the others perhaps do not, the indebtedness of this A-framework to the myth of creation.

90. In his discussion of the True Socialists, Marx adds that the philosophers ultimately reduce the human being to nature. In particular, he claims that, with the philosophers, “the self-consciousness of man is ... transformed into the self-consciousness of nature within him” (473). Thus, the philosophers hold, with Feuerbach, “that ‘man’, ‘pure, genuine man’, is the ultimate purpose of world history” (486). They make sense of this, however, as a process by which nature arrives at its own perfect form. This results in a view on which “man” is “a mere passive mirror in which nature becomes aware of itself” (473). As on Marx’s early anthropological framework, the engine of historical change is not, ultimately, human activity itself, but the self-transformation of nature.

91. Marx raises some general problems for this framework, suggesting he has further reflected upon his *1844 Manuscripts* theory. These passing criticisms belong to the negative moment of Exculpatory Naturalism (cf. §6.7). Marx notes, for instance, that “the Germans [should not] brag so loudly of their knowledge of human essence, since their knowledge does not go beyond the three general attributes, intellect, emotion and will” (511). This clearly bears on Marx’s own early theory of human nature, which identifies exactly these three human attributes (cf. §§4.56-58).

Marx also raises a sophisticated criticism of his earlier theory of history. He suggests that, if the final aim of society is to realize human nature, “it remains incomprehensible why society should not always have been a true image of nature” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 475). His suggestion is this: the philosophers fail to explain why it is necessary for human nature to begin in an impoverished form, such that it arrives only after time at perfect expression. On Hegel’s theodicy, humanity just is the self-consciousness of God—who, desiring to reflect in time upon his own

perfection, intentionally returns to an incomplete state. No such easy explanation is available to those secularizing philosophers who would cast <nature> instead of <God> in the agent role.¹³

92. Marx gives a genetic exculpation of this framework—in place of his own early anthropological framework—from the perspective of his mature R-framework. He begins by explaining how otherwise rational observers should come to suppose that the human species is explanatorily fundamental in universal history. In this, he picks up where his exculpation of idealism (cf. §7.78) leaves off: he claims that, in actual fact, changes to the form of intercourse that are consequent upon developments in the productive forces give rise to new manifestations of life, and new intellectual manifestations of life (e.g. ideology) in particular. This gives rise to the appearance that history consists in the progress of ideas, and that it is the ideas themselves that shape our lives.

Marx adds to this, however, that “[t]he ideas and thoughts of people [are], of course, ideas and thoughts about themselves and their relationships, their consciousness of *themselves* and of people *in general*” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 183). Thus, the different ideological frameworks that move in and out of preponderance are so many competing theories of <man>. This creates the appearance that it is the human species itself that undergoes change in history. Thus, Marx claims that, “after the ideologists had assumed that ideas and thoughts had dominated history up to now ... nothing was easier than to call the history of consciousness, of ideas ... the history of ‘man’ and to put it in the place of real history” (184). That the human species is a kind, not an individual, is no problem, because the ideologists already take history for the history of abstracta (i.e. ideas).

¹³ Note, however, that the mature Marx does have an explanation for why the division of labor starts off in bad shape (i.e. such that slavery, even in its crudest forms, is common). Namely, it owes to “the division of labour in the sexual act” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 44). Just by their physical nature, women are apportioned an unfair share in the reproduction of the species (cf. §7.22). Marx’s claim is that men take advantage of women’s vulnerability during pregnancy to institute the first form of inequity, which doubles as the first form of property: “the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 46). Marx holds that the form of the family undergoes change over time, but also that it retains some of this original character. See Engels (1990, pp. 129-276).

93. Marx claims that the apparent plausibility of the theory of estrangement arises when “the average individual of the later stage [is] ... foisted on to the earlier stage, and the consciousness of a later age on to the individuals of an earlier” (89). Thus, we begin with the idea that the manifestations of life typical of the era in which we live are essential or eternal expressions of human nature. Marx thinks that we possess a general disposition to this sort of error (cf. §7.60). Looking back at earlier eras, however, we find different manifestations of life. These appearances combined make plausible the conclusion that the individuals of those earlier eras fall short of realizing the human nature (i.e. because they fail to bring out the corresponding manifestations of life). Combined with the view of history as the evolution of the human species, this gives rise to the idea that transformations in the manifestations of life are changes in the degree of estrangement.

94. Finally, Marx exculpates those who hold to the speculative metaphysics of nature. He holds that, once we have accepted that individuals in earlier epochs fail to realize the human nature, it is natural to conclude that individuals in the present age may too. Thus, we recognize in good faith that many present-day individuals are suffering, and conclude that we all together, as a species, still fail to realize the true human nature. On this note, Marx writes that “[t]he nonsensical judgment of the philosophers that the real man is not man is in the sphere of abstraction merely the most universal, all-embracing expression of the actually existing universal contradiction between the conditions and needs of people” (Marx and Engels 1975c: 430). The judgment is an “expression” of this contradiction just in the sense that it reflects the corresponding appearances.

Marx goes on to claim that, by this maneuver, the ideologist “ascribes to *nature* the mental expression of a pious wish about human affairs” (473), namely that individual human beings

should live under equitable social conditions. However, if the ideologist, as a good faith inquirer, arrives also at the (correct) view that every state of affairs, equitable or otherwise, is explainable in principle in terms of natural factors, it will follow that some states of affairs not satisfying this pious wish are nevertheless explained by <nature>. Accordingly, the ideologist will have to accept that sometimes nature itself does not realize its true nature: that just as human beings are not always human beings, nature is not always nature; and progress of humanity becomes progress of nature.

95. Thus, Marx's elliptical criticism of his own earlier framework commitments conforms to the pattern of argument we would expect on Exculpatory Naturalism. He explains his own early anthropological R-framework away as an illusion given rise to by misleading appearances. Moreover, he does this from the perspective of his mature anthropological R-framework, which he arrives at by abduction. In the process, he reclassifies his early framework as an A-framework, treating it as a successful description only of the appearances. In doing so, he makes clear that his mature framework has no truck with the concept <man>, central to the earlier framework. He writes that he "does not dream of wanting to give anything to 'man'," as he "is not at all of the opinion that 'man' 'needs' anything apart from a brief critical elucidation [i.e. exculpation]" (208).

By explaining his earlier framework away, Marx demonstrates the descriptive-explanatory superiority of his candidate R-framework. He shows, in particular, that his R-framework can account for the appearances that give rise to the A-framework, thus that it can account for the genesis both of the A-framework's descriptive-explanatory successes, and of its failures. Thus, through this genetic exculpation, Marx secures the status of his R-framework as a legitimate critical successor to his early anthropological framework (cf. §6.54).

96. Incidentally, Marx's genetic exculpation of his early anthropology is possible only in virtue of his mature theory of ideology as a manifestation of life, explainable in principle in terms of underlying patterns of production. This is the eventual evaluative use to which Marx puts his theory of ideology (cf. §7.46). The empirical theory itself, however, remains distinct from this application.

97. My reconstruction thus far makes clear the relation of continuity that Marx's mature R-framework stands in to his earlier one. I have already argued that the relation of heuristic continuity holds between the two (cf. §7.40): Marx treats his early framework, as well as many others, as a heuristic or model in his abduction to his mature framework. Moreover, because Marx abandons the explicative inference procedure of discovery when he abandons Genetico-Critical Explication, his early and mature frameworks do not stand in the relation of discursive continuity (cf. §6.36). It follows that the mature theory cannot be understood as a simple extension of the earlier one.

However, as I have argued, Marx establishes his mature theory as a legitimate successor by showing that it (naturalistically) corrects against the errors of the earlier theory. Thus, Marx's mature R-framework stands in exculpatory continuity with his early framework. It follows that Marx's mature R-framework does not irrationally change the topic: Marx is right to respond to questions posed in the conceptual vocabulary of his early framework with answers in the vocabulary of his mature framework (cf. §6.55). This resolves the 20th-century continuity debate: Marx's mature writings stand in heuristic and exculpatory, but not discursive continuity with his earlier writings. With this result, we can put an end to vague debates about continuity in general.

7.5. Concluding Remarks

98. Marx's mature ethnological productionism is a critical result: it is the framework he arrives at by hewing close to the rational precepts of the critical program in philosophy (cf. §1.15). It corrects against the errors both of his own earlier framework, and against those of other competing frameworks. Marx's turn to his mature ethnological productionism, although it is a turn away from traditional metaphysics toward scientific anthropology, does not constitute a turn away from philosophy. It is instead the result to which Marx's consistent rationalism and fallibilism in philosophy drives him. It is the culmination of his turn to naturalism in philosophy.

99. Marx's commitment to criticism is double: (i) he recognizes that our first-order commitments must always be subject to rational scrutiny; but (ii) he also recognizes that the procedures by which we enact that rational scrutiny must themselves be criticized (§1.20). He begins, therefore, by criticizing both the first-order commitments and the methods of his philosophical forebears.

Marx criticizes Rational Explication by his Accommodation Argument (cf. §2.52), arguing that it preserves representationally inadequate commitments across explications. This leads him to articulate his early method, Genetico-Critical Explication, as a candidate replacement for Rational Explication, introducing the genetic exculpation procedure of justification (cf. §3.54). He employs this method, in turn, to criticize the first-order theories of Hegel and Feuerbach, deriving his early anthropological framework by explicative inference as a necessary rational corrective against their shortcomings (cf. §4.72). He justifies his own framework by explaining these past theories away.

100. On my reconstruction, Marx then subjects his own early method to scrutiny, concluding that it is shaped, for the worse, by a particularly unfruitful analogical model: the philosopher's stone

(cf. §5.101). In particular, he concludes that Genetico-Critical Explication is characterized by the same sort of uncritical conservatism as Rational Explication—the problem it is designed to correct. This leads him, in turn, to abandon the explicative inference procedure of discovery, replacing it by abduction (cf. §6.22). Thus emerges Marx’s mature method, Exculpatory Naturalism.

Marx then employs Exculpatory Naturalism to arrive at his mature R-framework: a revised and corrected ethnological productionism (cf. §7.31). He then employs this mature framework to give a genetic exculpation of his earlier one, classifying it as an illusion given rise to by misleading appearances. This, in turn, functions to justify the mature framework, securing its status as a legitimate critical successor to the early framework (cf. §7.97). It follows that Marx’s mature theory stands in heuristic and exculpatory, but not discursive continuity with his earlier one.

101. Marx’s intellectual progress during the period 1841 to 1846, therefore, emerges across a tightly woven series of rational criticisms. These criticisms are directed, by turns, at Marx’s philosophical predecessors, and at his own earlier writings, at methods, and at first-order commitments. Each act of criticism draws Marx nearer to his mature methodological naturalism and to his mature ethnological productionism, as we find them expressed in *The German Ideology*. This rational genealogy, as reconstructed here, highlights one possible route from the rationalistic and anti-dogmatic principles constitutive of the critical tradition in philosophy to a version of the “bald naturalism” (McDowell 1996: 79) so often dismissed by erstwhile defenders of that tradition.

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