

THE POLITICS OF CRITIQUE

DICK HOWARD

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of
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Dick Howard

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Preface

Kant wrote three "Critiques"; Marx wrote more. Marx never explained what he meant by "critique," nor did he write the methodological theory in which he promised to explain why and how his "dialectic" differed from its Hegelian predecessor. Kant sought constantly to explain the conditions of possibility of his own critique, which took finally the form of a system made explicit in the introduction to the *Critique of Judgement*. At that point, said Kant, philosophy can pass from critique to "doctrine." But Kant never explained what he meant by this doctrinal philosophy. I have tried to suggest that it points to the need for a political complement to critical philosophy.¹ Marx was concerned constantly with just this political complement, whose theoretical necessity he saw founded on the incomplete realization of the critical philosophy in Hegel's dialectical system. But Marx's failure to elaborate his own political dialectic made itself felt in the constantly present temptation toward an economistic reductionism from which he did not always escape.² *The Politics of Critique* is first of all my attempt to inherit the legacy of Kant and Marx.

The nineteenth-century heirs of Kant and Marx sought a synthesis which could salvage critical philosophy and politics. Two schools developed, known by their geographical centers in Marburg and Heidelberg. The Marburg neo-Kantians proposed a two-world theory, suggesting that causality reigns supreme in the phenomenal world, as in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, whereas the ethical imperatives of *The Critique of Practical Reason* determine moral demands whose application points toward politics. This "Kantianism" permitted its adherents to accept the economic theory of Marx's *Capital* while engaging in political activity under the banner of Social Democracy. The Heidelberg neo-Kantians sought their synthesis in the domains of culture and history to which neither Kant's first nor his second *Critique* was addressed. Their theory was not concerned so much to integrate Marxism and its politics as to go beyond their limits.³ The result of the

Heidelberg rethinking of its heritage is a “hermeneutical” philosophy, which has been more fully developed in the twentieth century under the influence of Heidegger and Gadamer. The Marburg syncretism, on the other hand, was simply one of the minor casualties of the Great War.

The twentieth-century heirs of the quest for a Kant-Marx synthesis gathered in another geographically defined school: the Institute for Social Research located in Frankfurt. Under the direction of Max Horkheimer, the Frankfurt School sought to develop a “critical theory” in the pages of its *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Their inspiration was drawn from Lukacs’s monumental integration of German Idealism into the framework of Marxism in *History and Class Consciousness*. Fascism drove the Frankfurters into exile; increased lucidity about developments in Russia induced doubt in their Marxist assumptions. The twin forms that Horkheimer called the “authoritarian state” dashed the optimism that animated the earlier critical theory. The progressive Marxist dialectic was replaced by Horkheimer and Adorno’s “dialectic of enlightenment,” for which modernity is the culmination of a world-historical process through which the critical force of Reason has been subverted by an “instrumental reason” capable only of determining means toward ends that it can accept only blindly and without critique. This world-historical pessimism rediscovers the insights of the hermeneutic philosophy in its condemnation of modernity. Yet the Marxist optimism, and combativeness, of the old critical theory remained present in thinkers like Marcuse and Adorno. The latter’s assertion that philosophy remains actual precisely because “the moment of its realization was missed” and the former’s insistence on “the permanence of the aesthetic” point to a crucial aspect of the Kantian critique which the Marxists had neglected: the distinct role of aesthetic judgement. The analysis of the problems of modernity could be approached from this new perspective.

The renewal of the Frankfurt critical theory has not followed the aesthetic track suggested in the last works of Marcuse and Adorno. Insofar as that source has been mined, the impetus has come from French “post-modernism” whose philosophical roots lie with the radicalized Heideggerian hermeneutics. The issues raised in that context go beyond my concern in this volume.⁴ Jürgen Habermas has attempted to reconstruct a critical theory that is true to the intentions of the original Frankfurt School while avoiding the philosophical antinomies on which that theory came to grief. Habermas’s first synthetic effort, *Knowledge and Human Interest* (1968), was rooted in the tradition of German Idealism from Kant to Marx. The new version of this critical theory, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), makes possible a direct confrontation with the problems of modernity (and with the French), undertaken in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985). Disillusionment with modernity in the twentieth century had been based on the twin *political* experiences of fascism and Stalinism. Habermas takes a different tack, seeking a philosophical foundation for a socialist and democratic politics in the face of what he calls in another recent volume *The New Unintelligibility* (1985). However adequate for the analysis of

the forms of modern *society*, Habermas's new theory does not address directly their properly political foundation.

The philosophical problem of a modern politics was not posed first in the twentieth century; its roots lie with the phenomenon of Revolution, which Kant and Marx confronted each with his own tools of critical thought. Kant's well-known sympathy with the French Revolution, even after his disciples and successors had turned away from its more radical phases, has posed a problem for interpreters. One key to his position is found in the influence of Rousseau on his thought. Read as Kant might have interpreted him, Rousseau provides a first approach to the question of modern revolution by posing philosophically the question of its *origin*. The French Revolution was, of course, not the result of Rousseau's theories; nor does the French Revolution incarnate once and for all the essence of modern revolution. In addition to reading critically the French Revolution, a contemporary "politics of critique" has to explore that other foundational revolution, the American "War of Independence" declared in 1776 and consummated by the creation of a constitutional structure which functions still today. If the proposed "politics of critique" is adequate, it will have to be able to explain both of these Revolutions, as they occurred and as they have continued to affect the contemporary history which we call modern.

I have explained more fully the title and internal logic of this volume in the introduction. The politics of critique has first to legitimize critique as a theoretical stance; it must then define what it means by politics; only then can the critic go to work. Critique is made legitimate by "Unmaking a Case" (Part I); politics is generated in "Making a Case" (Part II), it remains for "The Working Critic" to draw the implications (Part III). This progression is clear in the two chapters on Kant (Chapters 1 and 5) and the two chapters on Marx (Chapters 2 and 6), which are brought to a working synthesis by the question of modernity (Chapter 9). The privileged status of Kant's notion of reflective judgment in Parts I and II does not mean that the synthesis of critique and politics takes place in the realm of aesthetics, or that either term can be reduced to what Kant called reflective judgement. The specificity of politics must be preserved, as must the autonomy of critique. This demands a specific method, whose nature is presented from the side of critique (Chapter 3) and from the side of politics (Chapter 7). The transition from autonomous critique to the question of politics is made necessary by the contemporary "crisis" of critical theory which is illustrated by a return to the usual interpretations of the American Revolution (Chapter 4). The transition to the working critic is suggested by another "crisis," this time within political theory, which suggests another return, this time from Kant to Rousseau (Chapter 8). The question of the *origin* of political and critical theory in the concept of revolution suggests the concept of *the* political as the condition of the possibility of both critique and politics.

The political reader may yet be unsatisfied. I offer no definition of *the* politics of critique, no formulas to delimit its goals or strategies, no tactics for its realization. Two concepts which recur repeatedly may help to explain this self-limi-

tation while concluding these prefatory remarks. The notion of origin, which grounds what I call in *From Marx to Kant* an “originary philosophy,” is introduced both negatively (Part I) and positively (Part II). Its effectiveness—in the dual sense of the German *Wirklichkeit*: actuality and activity—is illustrated in the example of the French Revolution (Chapter 10). The institutional political form assumed by the originary structure is that of the republic. The implications of “originary politics” as republican is illustrated by the rereading of the American Revolution (Chapter 11). This critical rereading of a political revolution underlines the activity of the originary politics *as democratic*.⁵ This is not to say, however, that “democracy” defines the politics of critique. Democracy is neither a goal to be sought nor a method for its realization. Democracy is a practice which emerged in those very conditions which I have defined as originary. In *this* sense, the politics of critique is democratic *and* revolutionary. The addition of the qualification “revolutionary” cannot, however, imply a voluntarism any more than it can suggest a foundationalism or determinism. Critique “has” a politics, and politics “is” a critique, precisely and only insofar as the autonomy of each is preserved.

Books, modern critics tell us, refer to other books. Although things are a bit more complex than that, the aphorism can serve to explain briefly the relation of this book to at least my own recent work. These essays were written within the context of a larger philosophical-political project. My attempt to understand and to reclaim *The Marxian Legacy*⁶ concluded that Marx himself blocked the path to an adequate political theory. Marx assumed the primacy of capitalist civil society, of which, in the last resort, politics could be only an epiphenomenon. What Hegel had taken as a problem became for Marx the locus of its solution. Contemporary society—which hardly merits the appellation “civil”—is neither the problem nor the solution; and that scant formula grounds the anachronistic proposal made in my *From Marx to Kant*.⁷ Kant’s philosophical politics turns around the challenge of the *creation* of civil society, as problem and as solution. But a philosophical politics must be accompanied by a political philosophy. Kant only points toward the outlines of such a theory. The second part of my larger project has been to provide the historical demonstration on which a political philosophy capable of creating civil society can be founded. Some of the steps in that direction are presented in the companion volume to this one, *Defining the Political*.⁸ Their full elaboration will be presented in a comparative study of the birth of modern society in the Prussian, American, and French Revolutions.⁹

But this book could not have come into being without the critical help offered by others, friends, institutions, and the journals in which the first forms of these chapters were originally published.

Thanking friends is always the most difficult; they are many, often helping without knowing it; and one, alas, always remembers too late the help offered by one or another. Nonetheless, without them one would not write, or write as well,

or as pertinently. Over the years I have received friendly criticism from Andrew Arato, Seyla Benhabib, Richard Bernstein, Cornelius Castoriadis, Jean Cohen, Val Dusek, Jean-Marc and Luc Ferry, Joe Flay, Jürgen Habermas, Gerhardt Horst, Karl Klare, Herman Lebovics, Claude Lefort, John Mason, Sigrid Meuschel, Olivier Mongin, Ulrich Rödel, Joel Roman, Burghardt Schmidt, Fred Siegel, and Paul Thibaud. I was helped also by several of the editors of the journals in which these articles appeared: David Rasmussen, Florindo Volpaccio, Jacques Julliard, and Stanley Diamond. Another editor, since returned to graduate study, Gerry O'Sullivan, first encouraged me to think about republishing some of my work. The philosophy department at Stony Brook supported the final preparations of this manuscript, for which James Clarke did the proofreading and constructed the index.

Most important, however, has been the generous help and the insights of Terry Cochran, my editor at the University of Minnesota Press. Terry read through a batch of things that I had written over the past decade and told me what it was that I had been asking without ever being able to ask it directly. I have learned enormously from talking with him in the process of preparing this volume, which would not have existed without him.

Institutional help over the years has come first of all from the Philosophy Department at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. In addition, I was supported for 15 months by a grant from the Humboldt Stiftung. Stimulation came also from my position at the Research Institute for International Change at Columbia University.

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1. "Kant's Political Theory: The Virtue of his Vices," *Review of Metaphysics*. Vol. XXXIV, Nr. 2, December, 1980, pp. 325-350.
2. "On the Transformation of Critique into Dialectic: Marx's Dilemma," *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 5 (1980), pp. 75-110.
3. "Hermeneutics and Critical Theory," originally presented at the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, published in *Critical and Dialectical Phenomenology*, ed. Donn Welton and Hugh J. Silverman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).
4. "Why Return to the American Revolution?" originally published as "Pourquoi revenir à la Révolution américaine," *Intervention*, Nr. 15, janvier-mars, 1986, pp. 88-96. English translation by James Clarke.
5. "Kant's System and (its) Politics," originally a lecture given at the University of Copenhagen, published in *Man and World*, Summer, 1985, pp. 1-20.
6. "Restoring Politics to Political Economy," originally published as "A Political Theory for Marxism: Restoring Politics to Political Economy," *New Political Science*, Winter, 1984, pp. 5-26.
7. "The Origins and Limits of Philosophical Politics," originally published as "Philosophy and Politics," Center for Humanistic Studies, University of Minnesota, Occasional Paper, Nr. 10, 1986.
8. "Rousseau and the Origin of Revolution," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 8, Nr. 4, 1979, pp. 349-370.
9. "The Politics of Modernism: From Marx to Kant," *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, Vol. 8, Nr. 4, 1981, pp. 361-386.

10. "The Origins of Revolution," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 14, Nr. 1, January, 1983, pp. 3-16.

11. "Reading U.S. History as Revolutionary," originally a lecture at the Collège International de Philosophie, published in the *Revue Française de science politique*, février, 1988. My translation.

Introduction

The Politics of Critique

A. A Simple Intuition

All books begin with a simple intuition. The author then spends years tracking down its implications, sometimes losing sight of the originary intuition in the process, sometimes rediscovering it in unlikely places or forms. The intuition is not somehow true or false, immediately meaningful or fully present, an *arché* or a *telos*. The intuition need not be singular, a unified sense or univocal idea; nor must it be intentional, the product of a searching mind or a consciousness seeking fulfillment. The intuition is not the immediate product of practical experience, nor does it depend on theoretical engagement; the opposition theory/practice is not pertinent in this context, although habit usually reintroduces that categorical pair to give determinacy to the intuition, which is better described as originary or *symbolic*. The habitual categories of metaphysics can be reinvoked without destroying the uniqueness of the originary intuition so long as their logic is followed through to its paradoxical conclusion. That is why the first two parts of this volume can use metaphysical categories in the service of "Unmaking a Case," as well as in "Making a Case." Such apparently contradictory results lead to the rediscovery of the originary intuition. The return to the origin takes time; its results justify the republication of essays written over a decade in the form of a single work.¹

The operative function of the simple intuition as "originary" articulates its symbolic status. Immediate stipulation is not sufficient; and conceptual specification can come only after the work of the intuition itself is described. My concerns are philosophy and politics; the intuition of their originary relation took the form of a game, played on an interminable Texas highway with another political philosopher: if the Being of truth is the Truth of being, what about the Breakfast of champions and the Champion of breakfasts? or the God of love and the Love

of god? The Power of the word and the Word of power? This game can go on and on, with or without capital letters; in the present context, it might conclude with the formulation that “the Politics of critique is the Critique of politics.” But what could that really mean? Autobiographically, my originary insight was founded on a social critique of representative political institutions; the New Left attempt to create a participatory democracy seemed to unite the imperatives of philosophy and politics. But the critique of mundane representative politics could become simply the *art* of critique-for-its-own-sake; the identification of critique and politics that results from such an attitude denies the autonomy of each.² In this sense, the originary intuition founds a *strategy of avoidance*. The relation of this “strategy” to the originary insight is not accidental; although its first two parts might have been grouped under the reciprocally interacting headings of the critique of politics and the politics of critique, this volume has only a single title. The “Working Critic” in Part III does not pretend to offer a “dialectical” synthesis.

Intuitions belong to the language of everyday experience before they become the stuff of and for philosophy. My simple intuition could be expressed as the distinction between criticism and critique. Criticism is carping or biting, one-sided or unjust, engaged and motivated; critique claims to be neutral, objective, espousing the lines of the object it presents. Criticism is *external* to its object, incapable of justifying its own standpoint and of explaining the applicability of its measures to the issues at hand; critique is immanent, developing the *self-critique* of its object, making explicit what could not be expressed directly. Criticism presupposes a dualism between subject and object, knowledge and judgment, theory and practice; critique attempts to mediate between these metaphysical poles by showing them to express an “identity-in-difference” founded on a shared essence. Whether criticism is empiricist or rationalist it is always one-sided, dogmatic, and anti-historical; critique is dialectical, open-ended, and immanently historical. But the simple option for critique suggested by ordinary language sits ill with the common-sense demands of everyday politics, which are closer to those of criticism. If critique “has” a politics, the political implication of the simple intuition will have to be reevaluated radically. Politics will not be defined as the *social* struggle among competing interests played in a political arena defined by pre-given rules and roles. Politics will be neither reduced to society nor separated from its actual structure.

The young Marx formulated the intuition that seeks to combine radical philosophy and radical politics. “To be radical,” he wrote in 1843, “is to go to the root; and for man the root is man himself.” This aphorism expresses only a variant of the traditional notion of philosophy as the attempt to get beneath appearances, to find their “really real” or essential foundation. The philosophical quest for the Being of beings is transposed to the practical, human level. Radical humanism can claim to be political insofar as it uncovers the Archimedian point from which the world can be not only understood but changed. This political turn of classical philosophy marks Marx’s philosophical critique as *dialectical*. The

philosophical question and the political response are *immanent* within a single mode of questioning. As a humanism, philosophy is necessarily radical because the agent of the uncovering and the essential reality it uncovers are both human: subject and object, theory and praxis at once. This simple intuition permitted Marx to develop the philosophical theory of alienation into the social theory of alienated labor and then into an all-encompassing political theory which could include the structural and historical logic of the critique of political economy. All domains of human existence, its relation to nature and its inscription in history, could be derived from this one simple intuition. Past and present could be understood; the shape of the future as their dialectical humanist overcoming was defined; subjects who had become objects could reconquer their originary subjectivity. This, no more and no less, was what was meant by *revolution*. Politics, in turn and without mediation, was identified with Revolution.

The appeal of Marx's originary intuition can be understood easily. Despite the ringing denunciation, two years later, of those philosophers who "had only understood the world," Marx's proposals for changing it develop actively the dialectical critique that the Hegelians had ontologized into a metaphysical law of World History. The "Theses on Feuerbach" condemn the metaphysical separation of subject from object which treats the latter as dumb matter whose inertia acquires form only from the external intervention of the philosopher's criticism. Marx's dialectical critique accentuates instead a material world which is active because human praxis is immanent within it. He insists on the central place of "revolutionary praxis," but this praxis is no more clearly defined than was the "lightning of thought" that was to activate proletarian practice in 1843. Despite this remnant of externality (or "idealism"), the intuitive identification of politics and revolution is satisfying; politics appears to descend from the heavens, its difference is reduced through its humanization. But the externality of what Marx called the feudal "democracy of unfreedom" is replaced by a dialectical image of society as a self-contained field of forces immanent to civil (or bourgeois: *bürgerliche*) society. The result is a "revolutionary" theory founded on a "Critique of Political Economy." The "political" nature of this economy cannot be explained by the dialectical critique which makes a virtue of its immanence within civil society. The radicality of the intuition is thus avoided by the "dialectical" unification of critique and politics.

The difficulty centers on the relation of political criticism and dialectical critique. Marx does not want to adopt the metaphysical identity philosophy canonized as Hegelianism. As opposed to the criticisms from the "German Ideology" preached by the "Holy Family," Marx refuses to identify "the politics of critique" with "the critique of politics." He does not play the game in which the "Truth of being" corresponds to the "Being of truth." Rather, already in 1843, he insists that the "weapon of the critique" must *replace* "the critique of the weapons." The dialectic that underlies this critique is historically specific. The humanism which founds the entire project as revolutionary is not ontological; the immanent critique formulated by Marx's praxical humanism is possible only

under historically specific social and economic conditions. That is why Marx insists on the *proletariat* and not simply on "man" as the revolutionary subject; and that is why his critical theory claims to be the world's own *self-critique*, a reflexive project possible only when that world has arrived at a certain level of maturity. Critique and criticism come together in this concrete historical moment. The difficulty is that, however historically specific, the world's dialectical self-critique becomes a metaphysical identity philosophy; the Being uncovered by philosophy is treated on the same level of reality as the beings of which it is supposed to be the foundation. Formulated more concretely, *the critique's virtue of remaining immanent to civil society becomes a vice at the level of politics*. "Revolutionary" politics has to be defined more precisely if the immanent dialectical ontology is not to be replaced by the arbitrariness of external criticism cloaked in the dialectical materialist garment of Marxism.³ This would be simply the inversion of the dialectical unification of critique and politics.

A different implication of Marx's originary insight is suggested by another passage from his early work. "We do not face the world in doctrinaire fashion, declaring, 'here is the truth, kneel here' . . . We do not tell the world, 'Cease your struggles, they are stupid; we want to give you the true watchword of the struggle.' We merely show the world why it actually struggles; and consciousness is something that the world *must* acquire even if it does not want to."⁴ Marx clearly intends to oppose an immanent dialectical critique to the external criticism adopted by his erstwhile Young Hegelian friends. His philosophical argument can be generalized politically. One can distinguish between a *theory for* revolution, which seeks to give slogans, tactics, or 'weapons' to the political agency, and a *theory of* revolution, which develops dialectically the logic immanent to the human history which has reached the dynamic potential contained in capitalism. The difficulty that vitiated the immanent dialectical theory of revolution from within civil society is brought to a head in this formulation; the "revolutionary praxis" of the young Marx's humanism can become the historical economism of the mature Marx for whom praxis becomes a dependent function of an immanent historical logic whose motor is economic. Politics is replaced either by history or by economics—or by their confused unity. The result is that critique and criticism, philosophy and politics, have been once again identified; but this time, instead of subsuming critique under criticism the relation is inverted; critique is now simply identified as "revolutionary," and nothing more need be said.⁵

What Marx took to be solutions to "the riddle of history" are analyzed here as "strategies of avoidance." This concept puts into question both the idea that Marx had found solutions (in "Unmaking a Case") and the assumption that he knew what in fact the riddle asked (in "Making a Case"). Strategies of avoidance are formulated to ensure certainty, about the answers or at least about the questions. Criticism thinks it knows the answers; critique is certain of its questions. Marx seeks to unite them in an immanent dialectic. To succeed, he must provide a *mediation*, something in which both poles participate but with which

neither is identical. The mediation may be provided by the practical humanism and accompanying theory of alienation; it may be suggested by a theory of historical progress which explains why problems arise as they do and when solutions can be proposed with the same necessity; or a structural logic of material production may be invoked to the same end. Each proposed mediation is based on an identical structure: criticism and critique are assumed to partake of a common identity which makes each possible. Economic crisis is interpreted as the inevitable product of a *structural* logic considered as a *natural* development which will produce its own healing process. Historical development obeys a linear logic which includes "free" individual choice in its calculations. Such dialectical mediation leaves no room for politics; critique is equated simply and univocally with revolution; there is no place for a *politics of critique*.⁶

This presentation of the strategies of avoidance suggested by Marx's originary insight underlines its difference from my own simple intuition. Of course, a "better case" can be made for Marx: he is brought closer to my own originary intuition by "unmaking" his dialectical theory on the basis of his own discovery of the distinction between the criticism and the critique of ideology (Chapter 2); while my intuition serves to "make" the place for a Marxist questioning of the political (Chapter 6). But the politics of critique cannot be formulated with the tools that constitute the Marxian legacy.⁷ The strategies of avoidance analyzed in the first two parts of this volume were discovered in the attempt to inherit the legacy as such a politics. In "unmaking" the strategies by which political critique is defined, the implicitly presupposed concept of critique is made explicit; the result is not a new definition of politics but rather an awareness of the complications and complicity of the activity of critique and the object it intends and yet constantly, if unconsciously, schemes to avoid. On the other hand, when the case for critique is "made," the necessity of such evasive maneuvers on the part of the critique is presupposed in order to reconstruct the definition of a political space which makes possible an autonomous critical theory of the type which was "unmade" in the first part. The pattern that appears in these two parts is similar to the structure analyzed by Paul de Man as a necessary "blindness" which is the price of critical "insight." But that pattern is not itself the originary intuition; it does not govern the "working critic" who is politically active in Part III.⁸ The simple intuition is not reducible to a single, univocal or universal ground or cause; the *originary* or *symbolic* structure that underlies the operative strategies of avoidance remains to be specified conceptually.

B. Its Conceptual Formulation

The simple intuition attempted to hold open the space between critique and politics by avoiding the "strategies" which transform critique into an immanent dialectics and politics into external criticism. The open space preserves the autonomy of critique and politics; at the same time, their presence in it prevents them from becoming indifferent to each another. This "space" of the originary intu-

ition was defined as symbolic. The categories of theory and practice could be applied to this symbolic structure only as metaphysical determinations which must be constantly “unmade” by the anti-strategy that affirms the autonomy of critique. At the same time, the temptation to treat this symbolic space as if it were a *real* mediation that founds the immanent dialectical critique in which politics and criticism are identified and conflated has to be avoided. The symbolic space is “real” in the sense that it exists as actual; as a mediation, it is *wirklich*, active, known only in its effects, never in the plenitude of existence. The conceptual formulation of the simple intuition concerning the symbolic space that is the condition of possibility of both critique and politics must show how this *wirkliche* mediation works. This will also explain why the simple intuition was called *originary*. At the same time, this originary symbolic structure permits a clarification of the constant recurrence of the “strategies of avoidance” whose different forms are obedient to a simple but systematic logic that allows not only for “unmaking” the deformations Marx called ideology but also for “making” an originary method which “governs” the working critic.

The strategies of avoidance are defined by their denial of the autonomy of critique, their refusal to accept its act-character and to understand its peculiar status as mediation; instead, explanation replaces interrogation, the symbolic is treated as real, the origin as a cause. These strategies attempt to cope with the dilemmas of the “dialectic of enlightenment.”⁹ How can reason justify the critique of reason? If the justification is political, the problem of the externality of criticism re-emerges; if the justification lies within reason itself, the ensuing dialectic presents only the appearance of an autonomous politics. The critic is caught in a dilemma. Either the critique is its own self-foundation—in which case the critic is not necessary because the critique lies in the things themselves; or the critique is founded on something external to the criticized relations—in which case the critic cannot avoid the accusation of arbitrariness since the critique depends on criteria to which it can appeal but which it can know only by falling into that immanence of self-foundation which makes the critic unnecessary. Kant called these twin errors “dogmatism” and “scepticism”; his critical philosophy showed the necessity of each pole, and the danger of its one-sided acceptance. Kant’s notion of “critique” differs from the dialectical concept developed by Hegel and Marx. For him, critique tends to become identified with philosophy itself. This preserves the autonomy of critique, but it leaves open the question of the political space which defines the mediating and active character of the critique.¹⁰

The difficulty of maintaining philosophy as critique against the temptation to integrate it dialectically into a system is made apparant by the ambiguous genitive that defines Kant’s *Critiques*. Who, or what, is criticizing whom, or what in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? Is reason the subject or the object of the critique? Under what warrent, according to what criteria, and from what motivations is this “critique” initiated? What is the standard according to which it is judged valid? The reader will recognize these questions as the “game” which introduced my

simple intuition. From that perspective, it might be thought that Kant is criticizing negatively the claim of reason to be pure; but in that case he would not have written a *Critique of Practical Reason* to affirm pure reason's practical import. Similarly, if his goal were to analyze empirical knowledge in the critical reflection of pure and practical reason, he would not have accompanied each positive *Critique* with a "transcendental dialectic" to explain the necessity of the errors it criticizes. Kant is adding to the originary "game" an analysis of the strategies of avoidance. But Kant's own temptation to integrate the autonomous critique into the immanence of system becomes clear in the the third moment of his critical philosophy. The *Critique of Judgement* is explicitly reflexive¹¹; its subject and its object are identical; judgment is the self-critique of reason as at once necessary and yet not motivated or justified by a dialectical immanence. The structure recalls, anachronistically, Marx's theory of the revolutionary proletariat. It suggests why the systematic elaboration of my originary intuition adopted the title *From Marx to Kant*. The "'Kant'" to whom critique returns to discover its own political implications has to be reconstructed in terms of the originary intuition.

The temptation is to develop the simple intuition by equating critique with the faculty of judgment and suggesting that its politics is defined by the specific form of judgment introduced in the third *Critique*. As Kant explains, the judgment of beauty is backed by no scientific or moral universals; its validity depends on the communication among humans by which they learn to think, disinterestedly, in the place of the other. This reflective judgment could be called "political" because it is not defined by pre-existent scientific or moral universals. The difficulty is that, instead of preserving that autonomy of critique and of politics through which the presence of each makes necessary that of the other, this proposal conflates the two in a mediation whose dialectic is the inverse identical to that proposed by Marx. The *Critique of Judgement* can serve to define negatively the necessity of a properly political domain (Chapter 1) by demonstrating the strategies of avoidance through which critique denies its own autonomy. It cannot define positively the structure of that autonomous political domain within which the critique can assert itself. That further move comes when Kant turns his attention from history to its political preconditions (Chapter 5).¹² The temptation to equate politics with history in terms of their common origin cannot be grounded by a dialectical system of critique. The unification is achieved at the cost of the distinctive domains it pretends to unify.

Critique at once depends on an autonomous political domain and yet preserves its own autonomy by "unmaking" the strategies by which the independence of the political is denied. This relation of dependence and independence between critique and politics can be called *originary*. The originary relation is not real; the originary function is not causal; the originary intuition is not univocal. The strategies of avoidance seek to destroy the originary tension, to fixate its instability, to define its meaning. Formally, the strategies are simple; one pole can be said to integrate, dominate, determine, or even to "overdetermine" the other; the poles may be separated, treated as really autonomous, or formally independent

from each other; or they may be analyzed as if they were identical to one another, simple dependent appearances of a common essence. Materially, the difficulty arises from the peculiar relation of *reversibility* that exists between the poles of the originary structure. The poles of the originary structure can be designated as respectively *genetic* and *normative*—so long as care is taken not to confuse these categories, which refer to the symbolic domain, with real causal or constitutional categories. The autonomy of critique which is affirmed by “unmaking a case” can be said to generate the kind of political domain which then “makes a case” that legitimates precisely that critical autonomy on which its sense depends. But the relation can be inverted; the political institutions can also function to generate a kind of autonomous critical sense which serves to legitimate in turn the political institutions which generated it.¹³ This reversibility makes the originary structure appear to be simply another illustration of the “game” that served to introduce the simple intuition. In fact, the reversibility serves to hold open the space that unites, while rendering autonomous, politics and critique.

The space that holds together and assures the autonomy of politics and critique has a conceptual structure which unites, in a relation of reversibility, genesis and normativity. This structure integrates as strategies of avoidance the metaphysical categories of theory and practice, which fail to express the simple intuition, with the Marxist unification of a theory *of* and a theory *for* revolution. For example, Marx’s theory of ideology, as analyzed in Chapter 2, grasps this originary relation, but then it mistakes its symbolic status by attempting to unite the reversible poles in the really existing proletariat.¹⁴ Critique becomes dialectic, and the autonomy of the political is lost in the process. The attempt to “make” a better case in Chapter 6 is only partially successful because its account of Marx’s debt to Hegel remains within the dialectic of essence and appearance as presented within civil society. The originary relation of genesis and normativity that is still identified with the proletariat—defined now as a question—can only point toward the absent place of the political. Marx can take the argument no further. Avoiding a critique of politics, he returns to the theory (and to the critique) of historical reality. The relation of critique and politics cannot be comprehended in such a dialectic; a *method* adequate to the originary structure is necessary.¹⁵

The preservation of the originary space cannot be assured simply by ambushing the multiple strategies of avoidance that attempt consciously and unconsciously to subvert it. The politics and the critique whose autonomy is preserved are not maintained in splendid isolation, as an end in themselves. They interact with each other, and they do so in a world which is not simply and consistently defined by the originary structure. Yet it is only within such a structure that the coordinate and autonomous action of politics and critique can take place. The “practical” task of method is to assure the advent and the preservation of such a symbolic structure.¹⁶ Two independent but interdependent moments define the method. As politics, method defines those *particulars* whose very particularity must be preserved by means of the reflective judgment whose place was demarcated by Kant. Not every particular, after all, can be said to be beautiful; nor does