

Class-Consciousness as Signaling the End of History

The aims of this essay as regards my view of *Class Consciousness* are trifold; they are linguistic, ontological, and phenomenological in nature. The linguistic aspect of my claim falls out of and points toward the ontological aspect, thus ultimately leading to my phenomenological claim. My view normatively prescribes an appropriate ontological referent of the term *Class Consciousness*: the subjective stance of an individual in a Post-Capitalist, classless society. In arguing for the philosophical misuse of the term *Class Consciousness*, I will provide a possible account of the subjective awareness that the term *Class Consciousness* could rightfully refer to as History ‘comes to an end’. I argue that the proper usage of the term *Class Consciousness*, as it fits in with Marx’s practical and theoretical views about the nature of a Post-Capitalist existence, ultimately points at a phenomenological referent. That is, it is a term which contains the properties of the answer to the question, ‘What is it like to live in a Post-Capitalist, classless society?’¹ No amount of facts about the material conditions of a Post-Capitalist society will ever answer this question for a member of a class.

My claims are often—if only partially—at odds with those made by others who discuss *Class Consciousness* and its manifestations. Georg Lukács, for instance, in his book *History and Class Consciousness*, rejects any psychological and phenomenological aspect to which the term refers. In his Preface to the New Edition (1967) to the most recent addition, however, he ultimately rejects this lack of the phenomenological stance which belongs to any discussion of *Class Consciousness*. In this rejection, he also lends to my own interpretation Hegel’s Master/Slave Dialectic as relying on a kind of Marxist Materialist teleology by admitting that, unless understood in this way, Hegel’s sublation results in the ‘end of reality’, and not simply the ‘end of History’. The following passages will give a sense of his mistaken rejection of the phenomenological aspect of his discussion of *Class Consciousness*:

But as, according to Hegel, the object, the thing exists only as an alienation from self-consciousness, to take it back into the subject would mean the end of objective reality and thus of any reality at all. *History and Class Consciousness* follows Hegel in that it too equates alienation with objectification. This fundamental and crude error has certainly contributed greatly to the success enjoyed by *History and Class Consciousness*.²

For objectification is indeed a phenomenon that cannot be eliminated from human life in society. If we bear in mind that every human expression including speech objectifies human thoughts and feelings, then it is clear that we are dealing with a universal mode of commerce between men.³

Only when the objectified forms in society acquire functions that bring the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man’s nature is subjugated, deformed, and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation[.]⁴

To take one example relating to the *Phenomenology*, emphasis is placed on Hegel’s worldliness in his economic and social dialectics as opposed to the transcendentalism of every time of subjective

¹ I am making an analogy to modern questions concerning *qualia*, or ‘What it’s like’ in general as used in Philosophy of Mind (a la Frank Jackson and Thomas Nagel).

² Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, (The MIT Press, 1971): xxiii-xxiv.

³ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*: xxiv.

⁴ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*: xxiv.

idealism. In the same way alienation is regarded [...] “as the immediately given form in which the present exists on the way to overcoming itself in the historical process.”⁵

On Lukács’ original view, each class has a pre-determined consciousness that it can achieve, and he denoted the Proletariat as the first class with the potential to achieve ‘true class consciousness’. I disagree with him on this claim; my view assumes a concrete psychological difference between members of a Capitalist versus members of a Post-Capitalist society. On the other hand, we share the view that *Class Consciousness* is dialectically derived through a Hegelian mode. Moreover, we agree that *Class Consciousness* is not a starting point, but a teleological end. Lukács defines his project post-*History and Class Consciousness* as an, “...attempt to work out an ontology of social being.”⁶ I take myself to be doing something similar; however, I am only focused on one particular ontological instance in what may well turn out to be a vast web of social beings if pursued further.

Where our viewpoints diverge again is a point of disagreement as to whether or not *Class Consciousness* can arise in tandem with the Capitalist mode of production—Lukács’ view—or whether it will require the abolition of the class structure in order for it to arise. I argue that it can only arise post-abolition of the class antagonisms which define the Capitalist mode of production. The disagreement can be summed up as follows: Lukács might argue that a thorough understanding of Marxist theory and being a member of the Proletariat class is what is required for *Class Consciousness* to arise in an individual, inspiring them towards revolution. Contra Lukács, I argue that a thorough understanding of Marx which inspires one towards revolution are necessary steps towards the abolition of the class structure, leading to the ‘End of History’, which will mark a shift towards a classless subjective experience.

Through an examination of Hegel’s Master/Slave Dialectic as compared to Marx’s exposition on the relationship between the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie in the Capitalist mode of production, I hope to show that one can understand that relationship as more than an emulation or analog of the Master/Slave relationship. There are many considerations and layers through which Marx rests his theoretical pillars on the foundation of Hegelian thought. In scrutinizing a select number of these considerations, I will be defending the novel view that *Class Consciousness*, in the mature sense, can only arise in members of a Post-Capitalist society. This claim is prima facie extremely awkward. On the Marxist view, a Post-Capitalist society is supposed to be classless. On the surface, it is counterintuitive to entertain the thought that *Class Consciousness* can only belong to agents in a society wherein the class structure has been abolished, but this is precisely my claim. *Class Consciousness* cannot exist in the world in the way that the term is used throughout the post-Marxist literature if we are to take his Hegelian foundation seriously.

As regards the reasoning behind the phenomenological aspect of my argument, I am leaning on Vladimir Lenin’s presentation of Marx’s primary inquiry that motivates his work: From the point-of-view of historical development, how can the Proletariat overthrow the Bourgeoisie without forming a new society with its own class antagonisms?⁷ In short, it cannot. A necessary stepping-stone towards a classless, Post-Capitalist society is a momentary ‘Dictatorship of the Proletariat’⁸. Once the Dictatorship of the Proletariat is established wherein the state is ruled by the working class, the state begins to ‘wither away’. This is to say that the state does not immediately break down post-revolution; it becomes ‘unnecessary and impossible’ in a society without class antagonisms.⁹ This ‘withering away’ occurs within the framework of a Proletariat State—the Bourgeoisie-run State does not ‘wither’.

⁵ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*: xxxv.

⁶ Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*: xxxvii.

⁷ Vladimir Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917): 25. This is a paraphrasing of the overall sentiment of the passage.

⁸ A term originally coined by Joseph Weydemeyer, later adopted by Marx and Engels.

⁹ Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917): 25.

When discussing Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Lenin describes Marx's underlying motivation for all of his work: "Here, as everywhere, his teaching is the *summing up of experience*, illuminated by a profound philosophical world-conception and a rich knowledge of history."¹⁰ I take this claim to point towards the phenomenological nature of Marx's corpus. In order to get at the result of this 'summing up of experience', we must compare Hegel's Idealistic teleology to Marx's Materialistic teleology, their shared terminological, ontological, and phenomenological ends.

Idealism is characterized as the teleological move from consciousness towards material reality. I argue that this is in opposition to Marx's Materialist alternative in that the conditions of physical reality move teleologically towards consciousness.¹¹ Specifically, I argue that Marx's teleology moved towards *Class Consciousness* as I will outline it in this essay. For Hegel, History is ultimately dictated by Spirit.¹² Marx, a fervent Historical Materialist, argues to the contrary: it is the material conditions of the world that dictate the teleology of history specifically. While this overall characterization is appropriate in the grand philosophical scheme, it is my view that GWF Hegel, in his exposition of the conditions in which self-consciousness comes to be—described in the Lord/Bondman, or Master/Slave dialectic—is more closely related to Marx's 'Dialectical Materialist'¹³ teleology than he might have been willing to admit. I base this ascription on Hegel's explanation that certain material conditions must be brought about by Spirit in order for *Self-Consciousness* to arise in the world at all. Those material conditions then act on the conscious agents such that they can transform from conscious into *Self-Conscious* beings.

Merriam-Webster defines the term *Class Consciousness* as either (1) the state of being actively aware of one's common status with other in a particular economic or social level of society or (2) the state of believing in class struggle. Under this definition, at any given time, any individual can be in possession of a kind of *Class Consciousness* regardless of the awareness of the others existing in the class structure with them. Definition (2), from a philosophical standpoint, is even more worrying. Simply 'believing' in class struggle as a prerequisite for *Class Consciousness* is an epistemological horror story as regards overarching theoretical considerations. I argue that *Class Consciousness* as an actual realization in the world will only occur in a post-Capitalist mode of production; this is to say that *Class Consciousness* cannot have arisen *during* the Capitalist mode of production. It cannot be a symptom of the coming of the end of Capitalism, but will be a resulting occurrence of the transition out of this penultimate mode of production.

In the *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, GWF Hegel describes the 'end of History' as an occurrent moment wherein all humans will have a full awareness of themselves. This awareness—*Self-Consciousness*—when reaching its mature stage cannot be partial, but will have arisen in totality across the entirety of our species. He explains that History moves teleologically towards this complete self-awareness, moving through certain epochs, moving from East to West. History thusly begins in Asia and moves West with Europe as a final end.^{[14][15]}

Marx mirrors this direction of History in his exposition on the historical—ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois—modes of production which mark the various epochs of History.¹⁶ While these do not necessarily move from East to West, they have a similar teleological motion in that they point towards the

¹⁰ Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917): 26.

¹¹ Marx, *Capital (Introduction)*: 18-19.

¹² In this case, Spirit can be thought of as mostly synonymous with *Zeitgeist*, or the spirit of the times.

¹³ Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917): 26.

¹⁴ GWF Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*: 121. See the discussion on the direction of History as guided by Spirit.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Reason in History*: §1.3.1; "...the essence of Spirit—its substance—is Freedom. [...]" (22). Hegel describes Freedom as that which is not dependent on anything else for its existence. I argue that Marx defines Freedom in a similar way; the Proletariat, which is dependent upon Capital for their very existence, will not be free until Capital is abolished and they are no longer dependent on the Bourgeoisie for their existence.

¹⁶ Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*: 263.

same terminological end. Once the modern bourgeois, or Capitalist mode of production is abolished in totality, History will come to an end. Given that Hegel and Marx's final result of their teleological views marks the 'end of History' and are derived from the same Dialectical process, *Class Consciousness* can be described as a result of the end of History for Marx as *Self-Consciousness* is for Hegel.

The dialectical process used by Hegel to derive features of the world (such as Spirit which dictates the direction of History) fails to accurately describe states of affairs which belong to material history on Marx's view. However, he takes it to be an especially useful fiction as a philosophical tool. Hegel's first dialectic, *Becoming*¹⁷, is a prime example of the philosophical usefulness of the dialectical process for analyzing certain aspects of the world which at first seem to be oppositional, but in the end turn out to share an identity when viewed through the proper lens. When scrutinizing the content of the thesis (or the first moment of a dialectic) *Being* in an indiscriminate sense—*Being*, that is, with no properties, or *Being-in-itself*—one finds that an indiscriminate Being is on equal footing with its considerate opposite, and the antithesis of the dialectic, *Nothing*. For Hegel, *Being* is not a state of affairs itself. *Being* cannot be by itself. *Being* is a kind of property that belongs to other things which *are*.

Nothing, contra *Being*, when considered indiscriminately, exhibits the same metaphysical stance: *Nothing* is not a state of affairs in itself, but the lack of a state of affairs. In both cases, where *Being* and *Nothing* are often considered to be oppositional terms, Hegel shows that they are in effect exactly the same. As one attempts to focus on an indiscriminate *Being*, *Nothing* comes to the forefront. When focusing on *Nothing*, an indiscriminate *Being* comes to light. As these two indiscriminate terms trade focus in the dialectical process, the synthesis *Becoming* is derived; the process which shares both is revealed, and everything is either *Coming-to-Be* or *Ceasing-to-Be*. The world as such is in flux between *Being* and *Nothing* due to their status of being both exactly the same and simultaneously oppositional. This flux is the focal point of a firm understanding of Hegel's derivations.

The discussion of the first Dialectic here serves two purposes: (1) to provide a foothold on my own understanding of the nature and force of the Dialectical process when attempting to derive features of the world, and (2) because of the way in which Marx relies on the Dialectic *Becoming* in the 1844 Manuscripts when presenting his position on Hegel's considerations of subjectivity:

Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps *labor* as the *essence* of man—as man's essence which stands the test: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labor. Labor is man's *coming-to-be* for *himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labor which Hegel knows and recognized is *abstractly mental* labor.¹⁸

Here, Marx reveals an aspect of his own views on the subjectivity and essence of man. In comparing Hegel to 'modern political economists' he posits an agreement with this aspect of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.¹⁹ 'Political economist' is a label which Marx rejected, preferring instead Engels' description of him as a 'scientific socialist'. The subtitle of Marx's *Capital*, after all, is *A Critique of Political Economy*. I don't necessarily take Marx to mean, in totality, a *criticism* of Political Economy, although he is quite sharp, quite often as regards the Political Economists of his day.

This is not to say that he puts forth purely negative comments as regards political economy. On Marx's view, the Political Economists were good at doing what they did, they just missed the mark in understanding and outlining what he refers to in the above passage: the negative side of labor. The

¹⁷ Hegel, *The Science of Logic*: §21.69; "Pure being and pure nothing are therefore the same."

¹⁸ Marx, 1844 Manuscripts: *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy*.

¹⁹ For Hegel, 'phenomenology' refers to the science by which the essence of a man—his Spirit—is 'brought to light' through Philosophy. That is, doing 'phenomenology' reveals the nature of man to himself.

exploitation of the Proletariat by the Bourgeoisie's expropriation of their labor power by alienating them from that which they produce. In the passage above, although Marx is ultimately criticizing Hegel for misunderstanding the importance of the negative side of labor, he is sympathetic to Hegel's view of *abstract labor* in general. That is, he and Hegel agree that *abstract labor* is the *essence* of man.

Through an understanding of *labor* in the abstract—that which Marx anchors his comparison and reduction amongst all things in the Capitalist mode of production—he explicitly relies on the Hegelian process of *coming-to-be* to express this subjective similarity between his theory advanced in *Capital* and Hegel's theory of *Self-Consciousness* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For Hegel, it is *labor* in the abstract which separates humans from non-human animals because *labor* contains in it a will which is attributed to the Spirit contained within. Marx relies on the idea of 'praxis' to express a similar notion.²⁰ For Marx, 'praxis' refers to the content of a human being that makes him a 'species-being' at all; 'praxis' is the treatment of man by himself through both practice and theory as 'a *universal* and therefore free being'. This notion of a 'species-being' is further elaborated on by Marx as pointing to that which is essential to the existence of some creature in the world. For man, this essence is *labor*. In exerting themselves on Nature according to their own will, they distinguish themselves from non-human animals which produce according to a kind of instinctual essence that is not itself *labor*.

Marx's criticisms of Hegel mirror his criticism of Political Economy in general: The failure to recognize the negative aspect of *abstract labor*, and its potential to be exploited, contributing to the alienation of the working class. That said, the similarities expressed by both Hegel and Marx as regards the essence of man as well as the teleological motion towards the end of History are my main motivations for understanding *Class Consciousness* as *coming-to-be* in the same way the Hegel describes *Self-Consciousness*. *Class Consciousness* will only *come-to-be* when History has come to an end; it will not be partial nor arise only in one individual given their awareness of their position in an overarching social structure. While the term *Class Consciousness* summons a mood wherein one often thinks that it can be attained only while they belong to a certain class, this mood ought to be rejected. This is similar to the linguistic mood summoned by *Self-Consciousness*; it may seem that *Self-Consciousness* only requires two conditions: being a self and being aware that one is a self.

Through an exposition of Hegel's understanding of what it means to be *Self-Conscious*, I will show that *Self-Consciousness* requires more than *one* 'self', while simultaneously requiring an awareness of the self that is contained within another being, and not primarily their own. That is, *Self-Consciousness* requires the sublation and elimination of the individual as conscious by recognizing another as their equal; recognizing the consciousness of another is the only way in which *Self-Consciousness* can *come-to-be*. Ultimately, I argue that *Class-Consciousness* maintains this requirement for the sublation and elimination of the class structure described by Marx such that it can *come-to-be* at all.

There seems to be a contradictory aspect of the comparison between *Self-Consciousness* and *Class Consciousness* in that *Self-Consciousness* necessarily requires some 'other', yet I am arguing that *Class Consciousness* only arises when the class structure has been abolished. This contradiction is resolved in the consideration that *Self-Consciousness* only arises when the properties that make the other *different* sublimate into each other. As I will show, *Self-Consciousness* comes to be when there is no longer a Master or Slave. These terms no longer have any meaning. As regards *Class Consciousness*, the same holds true. The 'other', from the perspective of the Proletariat, is the Bourgeoisie. Through revolution, the Proletariat forces the hand of History, and simultaneously forces the Bourgeoisie to recognize the Proletariat as equal. For a short time, as noted by Lenin, the Proletariat will be the ruling class.

²⁰ Marx, *1844 Manuscripts, First Manuscript*.

It will be during this time—post revolution—that the Bourgeoisie will recognize the inherent equality as regards positive *and* negative abstract labor as the essence of both themselves and the other. As they will have lost their position of power and authority—that which allows them to ignore this equality between men—they will be forced to accept the equality and be integrated into the lower form of Post-Capitalist society, such that the higher form of Post-Capitalist society can *come-to-be*. This higher form will be classless, and be composed of a totality of agents whose subjective experience will be referred to by *Class Consciousness*. Lenin describes this as a state of affairs such that, “When the *majority* of people begin everywhere to [...] maintain such control over the capitalists (now converted into employees) and over the intellectual gentry, who still retain capitalist habits, this control will really become universal, general, national; and there will be no way of getting away from it, there will be ‘nowhere to go’.”²¹ Once everyone who still retains capitalist habits has been integrated as equals in the lesser form of the Post-Capitalist society, the conditions are right for the possibility of *Class Consciousness* to arise at all.

The specific occurrence described above can be compared to Hegel’s dialectical derivation of *Self-Consciousness* and how it *comes-to-be* in the world. It relies on a specific occurrence which is guided by Spirit with the teleological goal of bringing about the end of History: two persons which are conscious, but lack *Self-Consciousness*, meet each other in the wild and have what Hegel calls battle-to-the-death.²² This battle-to-the-death is required for entry into the Master/Slave relationship. The possibility of death is necessary for *Self-Consciousness* to arise. Still, it is of primary importance that the result of this battle-to-the-death is not death; the victor must allow the loser to live due in order to convert them into a tool for their own exertion on Nature. For Hegel the primary motive of all creatures is to exert themselves on Nature²³ and consume that which they produce in order to further their own well-being. All creatures are conscious, but not all creatures are self-conscious.²⁴ The occurrence of two conscious beings meeting each other and battling to the death is just an instance of beings exerting themselves on Nature in order to consume; neither of the conscious beings recognizes the other as conscious and thusly consider each other as a part of Nature and exert themselves on each other as such.²⁵

When these two beings enter into a battle, per Hegel, there is an opportunity for the victor to allow the loser to keep their life. This only occurs when the victor realizes that the loser has the potential to exert themselves on Nature in the victor’s stead. When this occurs, they enter into a Master-Slave relationship wherein the loser becomes the Slave and thus a tool of the Master’s through which the Master exerts himself on Nature. A major aspect of becoming a Slave is giving up the ability to speak for oneself in terms of their desires, intentions, and so forth. Their attitudes towards the world are no longer their own, but that of the Master’s working through them. Still, they do have a final say in becoming a Slave at all. As previously mentioned, it is the battle-to-the-death that is of utmost importance in the *coming-to-be* of the Master/Slave relationship. This battle-to-the-death, per Hegel, instills in each—but more importantly the Slave—the fear that comes along with the possibility of death. That fear is the underlying motivation for the Slave to continue on in his unfavorable relationship.

Hegel expresses this giving up of one’s own attitudes towards the world as follows:

²¹ Lenin, *State and Revolution* (1917): 84.

²² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*: §178-196

²³ Hegel, *PS*: §256-8; The essence of an organism is not expressed in its relation to its environment, but in its teleological relationship between itself and its ends. Its ends, however, are revealed through its preservation of itself (and in consciousness, through the observation of Reason, which dictates the laws of Nature); preservation of self is always represented not in what is produced, but in what is consumed by the organism for its own preservation. The Ends of the conscious being are different in that it is not *matter* which is necessarily produced or consumed, but often the *good* or the *bad* (the abstract content of reality).

²⁴ Hegel, *PS*: §258.

²⁵ Hegel, *PS*: §190.

This trial by death, however, does away with the truth which was supposed to issue from it, and so, too, with the certainty of self generally. [...] Death certainly shows that each staked his life and held it of no account, both in himself and in the other; but that is not for those who survived this struggle. They put an end to their consciousness in its alien setting of natural existence, that is to say, they put an end to themselves, and are done away with as *extremes* wanting to be *for themselves*, or to have an existence of their own.²⁶

The Slave becomes an externalized version of the Master's exertion, and what the Slave produces, the Master consumes. The Master must allow the Slave to consume just what it takes to keep him alive in order to continually exert himself on Nature in the master's stead.²⁷ A parallel to Marx's analysis of the production of surplus value is found here; the Capitalist must pay the Worker enough to satiate his needs, but less than his actual worth in order to generate further capital. Nature—or use value, for Marx—trades at face value in the process of production. Labor power is consumed in an inordinate scale to generate surplus value, and thus, the worker is exploited. Analogously, the Slave is exploited by the Master for his labor power, and the Slave is alienated from that which he produces through his exertion on Nature.²⁸

Hegel describes the Slave as, "...realis[ing] that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence...[.]"²⁹ Yet, his work is never-ending until the Master recognizes the consciousness in the Slave as being like his own. Before this recognition, consciousness is, "...only an empty self-centered attitude...[.]"³⁰ I take this to be more than simply analogous; that is, I argue that Marx uses the term 'alienation' throughout *Capital* as leaning on the Hegelian sense of the relationship between the Slave and that which he produces as being alien to him in the *PS*. This *alienation* is not just a divorcing of the Slave/Proletariat from that which they produce with their *labor*, but from the essence of their humanity itself, as well as a separation between themselves and the Master/Bourgeoisie, which are ontologically equitable beings as regards their essence: *labor*.

Once the Master-Slave relationship has begun, the master and the slave enter into definite relations³¹ with one another: their social and existential distinctions both rely on and define each other. A master cannot be a master without being master to a slave, and a slave cannot be a slave without being slave to a master. The terms themselves define each other in this way; one cannot speak of slaves without conjuring the content of 'master,' and vice versa. Previous to entering into this social relationship with one another, each the master and the slave necessarily exerted themselves on Nature in order to produce that which they would consume.

Once the social relationship is in play, the master begins the process of exerting himself on Nature *through* the slave, as opposed to through his own work. The slave then exerts himself on Nature in a proportion such that the master can consume what he is disposed to consume, along with the added production of what the slave himself must consume to survive. Hegel explains this relationship succinctly in that, "...what the [Slave] does is really the action of the [Master]. The [Master]'s essential nature is to

²⁶ Hegel, *PS*: §188.

²⁷ Hegel, *PS*: §187-9.

²⁸ Marx specifically speaks of alienation and exploitation as a means by which man loses his essence and freedom in Chapter 14 of *Capital*. He is speaking to the alienation of a person not only from the product of their labor, but alienation from themselves (in the de-skilling process). Simultaneously, their whole existence is enmeshed in the de-skilled manufacture which is imposed on them by Capital. The Proletariat is therefore alienated from themselves by their own work which dominates the majority of—if not all of—their time throughout their lives.

²⁹ Hegel, *PS*: §196.

³⁰ Hegel, *PS*: §196.

³¹ Hegel, *PS*: §190; The Master and Slave enter into a determinate relationship wherein they are a consciousness existing *for-self* which is simultaneously mediated through the being of another. The Master finds independence or *freedom* through the bondage of the Slave, and vice versa.

exist only for himself[.]”³² In short, the relation is such that, although the slave is actually *doing* the work, it is as though it is only the master working; the slave works not for himself, but for the master. Hegel explains that the recognition of the master by the slave and the slave by the master is, “...one-sided and unequal.”^[30*] This one-sided aspect of the Master/Slave relationship is particularly prudent, as Hegel and Marx both go on to describe the subjective difference between humanity and non-human animals as necessarily *universal*; that is, *Self-Consciousness* only occurs in totality when there are no one-sided recognitions of others.³³

For the sake of an example of the productive relations described above in a Marxist flavor, assume that the necessary amount of apples for a day’s survival is 5.^[34] Although there is no general notion of the requirement of a day’s work in terms of survival, I am working on the assumption that Hegel considers the relationship between Master and Slave as a survival tactic in itself; if the essence of man is *labor*, and *labor* is the process wherein man exerts himself on Nature through his will to attain and maintain is Freedom in order to survive as a man at all, then the Master exerting himself on Nature through the Slave transforms the Slave into a version of his own will in order to meet the needs of his own survival.

In order to survive, the Master and Slave, previous to entering into relations with each other, produced 5 apples each—the necessary level for survival—when they were producing only for themselves. The Slave must now continue to produce at least 10 apples—the minimum required for the two of them to survive—if the relation is to continue. If the slave fails to produce at least what is required for each of them to survive, the master will likely kill the slave and revert back to his default state wherein he exerts himself on Nature through his own production. In short, the slave produces 200% of the apples required per person per day in order to ensure his own survival as well as the master’s while only consuming 50% of that which he produces. There is a disanalogy here, however: Marx does not discuss the consumption of the Capitalist much. When he does, it is usually in the context of the ways in which the Capitalist is *not* an over-consumer. It is against the nature of the Capitalist to over-consume as it is contrary to the self-reproduction of Capital. Although he is not equivalent to what Marx refers to as a miser—a hoarder—he is also not an agent of over-consumption or glutton. The Capitalist plays a specific role in hoisting up the structures which allow for capital to replicate itself.

The skill required to produce 200% of the necessary amount of some good when combined with the energy expenditure required for that exertion paves the way for the foundational transfer of power in the abstract from the Master to the Slave. Over time, the slave becomes stronger, more efficient, and cleverer. He discovers or invents new ways to harvest apples at greater speeds. He becomes innovative in his quest for survival which hinges on his exertion of himself on Nature for two people instead of one.^{[35][36]} The confounding principle of this relation is that the slave also learns self-control; he relies on consuming only what is necessary and never more. Similarly, the Proletariat is alienated from the very possibility of over-consumption by nature of his position. Each becomes a more impressive producer while simultaneously maintaining his sense of gratitude for the fact that he is alive at all. This gratitude is the anchoring property of the Proletariat/Slave that allows him to continue to produce beyond his usual limit.

Contrarily, the Master begins to transform as well. He becomes a less impressive producer—or not a producer at all in any meaningful sense—and simultaneously forgets the gratitude that comes along with consumption of the product of one’s own exertion on Nature.³⁷ The Master is no longer certain of his *being-*

³² Hegel, *PS*: §191.

³³ Marx, *1844 Manuscripts, First Manuscript*: “But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself or its young. It produces one-sidedly, whilst man produces universally.”

³⁴ Marx, *Capital*: cf p340 on *necessary labor*.

³⁵ Hegel, *PS*: §195. “Work, on the other hand, is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off[.]”

³⁶ Marx, *Capital*: When applying the ‘abstinence principle’, the modern Capitalist staves off his desires (cf FN²¹).

³⁷ ^[37*] Hegel, *PS*: §192.

for-self. This is because he mediates his exertion on Nature through the Slave, and becomes dependent on the consciousness of another. He enjoys the fruits of the labor of the Slave without laboring for them himself, and thusly does not participate in the relationship of the work to the product. Similarly, the Bourgeoisie participates in the acquisition of Capital without participating in the concrete relationship between labor and production.³⁸ For Hegel, the Master is dependent upon the Slave for his sense of self. For Marx, the Bourgeoisie is dependent upon the Proletariat for its sense of self.

As the Slave becomes cunning and reserved, the master becomes lazy and over-consumptive. In time, the Master forgets how to exert himself on Nature at all. Not only does he fail to produce, but he loses the ability to produce altogether. Marx describes this aspect of the Capitalist as vampiric: “Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the worker works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has bought from him. If the worker consumes his disposable time for himself, he robs the capitalist.”³⁹ Simultaneously, “...the vampire will not let go ‘while there remains a single muscle, sinew or drop of blood to be exploited.’”^[37*]

At this point, the slave unknowingly⁴⁰ finds himself in a situation wherein he is at the bottom of a social hierarchy but the top of a material hierarchy. It is the same for the Proletariat. When the slave reaches his threshold of exploitation, he lashes out against the master, attempting to regain his position as a self-serving individual. So too when the Proletariat reaches their threshold for exploitation will they incite revolution. Marx presents the necessity of the revolution of the working class to ‘forcibl[y] overthrow...all existing social conditions’.⁴¹ The irony, of course, is that while both are at the top of the material hierarchy in they are the lifeblood of the entirety of the system, they allow themselves to be exploited under the guise of gratitude.

This guise of gratitude and the self-allowance of exploitation is a major motivation for my describing *Class Consciousness* as an end, and not a means. There is a continuous and unending irony in the antagonism of the classes as there is in the Master/Slave relationship: Should the Slave just stop producing for the Master, not only would the social relation fall apart, but the Master would die. So, too, for the Proletariat. Should they decide to remove themselves from work, and refuse to produce at the expense of their own labor-power being exploited, the entirety of the system grinds to a halt. If capital is vampiric, then like a vampire it requires feeding on the living to go on. If the working class is the ‘living’ aspect of the Capitalist mode of production, then when there is no longer a working class to feed on, capital shrivels up into nothing. After all, the Capitalist is not a miser; there are not loads of overstuffed coffers worth any *real* value. Value is realized by living labor.

Moreover, this irony dictates the fact that this threshold is not guaranteed to be reached; synthesis of the Master/Slave Dialectic is not a necessary outcome of the moment when two conscious beings enter into definite social relations due to the results of a battle to the death, but only a possibility. In engaging in this battle to the death, each simultaneously ‘stakes their own life’ while attempting to bring about the death of the other. It is among these two opposites that the possibility of Freedom—*Self-Consciousness*—lies at

³⁸ As the Capitalist is, in Marx’s words, “Only as a personification of capital...respectable” (*Capital*, 739). This is because when the Capitalist is acting as capital personified, they are not aimed at ‘acquisition and enjoyment’ of the fruits of the labor of others, but the ‘augmentation of exchange values’. He forces the progression of the means of production without the aim of surplus value. Only when the means of production reach a certain point can a, “...higher form of society...in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle” (*Capital*, 739). This ‘full and free development of every individual’ is what I take to be the foundational definition of a society wherein *Class Consciousness* has *come-to-be*.

³⁹ Marx, *Capital*: 342. ^{37*}: Marx, *Capital*: 416.

⁴⁰ Hegel, *PS*: §192; “...servitude is not yet aware that this truth [of being independent and *for-itself*] is implicit in it.”

⁴¹ Marx, *Communist Manifesto*: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains” (44). In this reference to chains, Marx is making a clear comparison of the working class to that of slaves, which simultaneously have nothing to lose but everything to gain; namely, their *freedom*.

all for conscious beings who have not elevated themselves to their full potential as self-aware and other-aware beings which are simultaneously *for-themselves* and *in-themselves*.⁴² Hegel remarks, “Thus the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle.”⁴³ Insofar as the Master and Slave enter into definite relations with each other, so too do the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie in the *coming-to-be* of the penultimate—Capitalist—mode of production. Capital, for Marx, is itself a social relation.^{[44][45]}

Ontologically, both the relationship between a Master and a Slave for Hegel and the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie for Marx are the same. They are both social relations between inherent equals; they are human beings whose essences are the same, measured in terms of *labor*. These relations are each mediated by *things*, and not by the qualities inherent in the persons (as social relations tend to be). In comparison to social relations such as friendship, siblinghood, or mother and fatherhood to child, it is the inherent qualities of the persons which tether the persons to each other. For friends, it is often general interests and similarities; for siblings, they are related to each other through their essence *coming-to-be* from the same sources; for parenthood to child, the parents are related to each other through the essence of the child, and vice versa. Due to the inherent equality between the parties, these social relations are relations of dominance. That is, they express the exploitation of another in a way that relations such as friendship, siblinghood, or parenthood do not. That is not to say that these other relationships cannot contain an exploitative aspect, but that exploitation is not *inherent* in them.

In the Capitalist mode of production, likewise in the Master/Slave relationship, it is the *things* external to the people which mediate their social relations. For Hegel, it is this mediation through things that *alienates* the Master and the Slave from both each other and their own Spirits, preventing the *coming-to-be* of *Self-Consciousness*. For Marx, it is this mediation through *things* that *alienates* the Proletariat from the fruits of their labor, and consequently from their own abilities and essences. This is especially exhibited in the consequences of the de-skilling process of manufacture.⁴⁶ This in turn divorces the Proletariat from themselves; it is not only the Capitalist which sees the working class as a means, and no longer an end in themselves, and thusly exploit their *labor*—their essence—in order to valorize capital into surplus value, but the working class who begins to see themselves as a means to a wage, for example.⁴⁷

Linguistically, in the same way as *Being* and *Nothing* are opposites that define each other terminologically, they are also the same when viewed through a lens of indeterminacy. A lens of indeterminacy refers to the dialectical discussion of *Becoming* on page 4 of this essay. In short, a lens of indeterminacy removes the properties of some content. If, when the properties are removed, the content loses meaning, then that content is itself a *property*, and not a thing which can *have properties*. *Being*, with no determinate properties, is *Nothing*, and vice versa. *Master* and *Slave* maintain this relationship. An indeterminate *Master* is just a singly conscious entity who exerts itself on Nature with no self-awareness. An indeterminate *Slave* is the same. They only find determinacy when they enter into the social relationship with each other, and that determinacy is linguistic and dispositional in nature. Where *Being* and *Nothing*

⁴² Hegel, *PS*: §187.

⁴³ Hegel, *PS*: §113-4.

⁴⁴ Marx, *Capital*: “[Wakefield] discovered that capital is not a thing, but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things” (932). Where Wakefield may have discovered that capital is this relation between persons mediated through things, Marx accepts this definition as accurate. See footnote 26 for the Hegelian comparison of the relation of the Master and Slave as one which is mediated through *things*.

⁴⁵ Hegel, *PS*: §190; “The [Master] relates himself mediately to the bondsman through a being [a thing] that is independent, for it is just this which holds the [Slave] in bondage; it is his chain from which he could not break free in the struggle, thus proving himself to be dependent, to possess his independence in thinghood.”; cf Footnote 23 on the relation of Slave/Proletariat to chains.

⁴⁶ Marx, *Capital*: “...constant labour of one uniform kind disturbs the intensity and flow of a man’s vital forces...” (460).

⁴⁷ Marx, *Capital*, Ch7 §2: Marx discusses the Valorization process as one which extracts living labor from the worker in order to inject that essence of the working class into ‘lifeless objects’ with the goal of converting money into a commodity, thus generating surplus value by exploiting them by forcing them to work ‘unpaid’ labor hours.

in-themselves fail to refer to anything but a process—*coming-to-be* or *ceasing-to-be*—*Master* and *Slave* maintain this property as well: they refer to the process of the *coming-to-be* of *Self-Consciousness*. They *act* differently given that they accept the indeterminate labels as defining their beings; it is in accepting these labels, *Master* and *Slave*, or *Proletariat* and *Bourgeoisie*, that they allow for the exploitation of the other or the exploitation of themselves. The titles alone do not alter their essential natures. Where *Becoming* is the synthesis of the dialectical relationship between *Being* and *Nothing*, for *Master* and *Slave*, the synthesis of the *Master/Slave Dialectic* is *Self-Consciousness*.

Before tipping the scales of this paper towards concluding comments on Marx and the ontological, linguistic, and phenomenological status of *Class Consciousness*, it is helpful to point to the fact that synthesis does not occur until the final condition of the *Master/Slave Dialectic* is met: The two conscious beings recognize the consciousness in the other, thusly recognizing the consciousness in themselves, and abolish the hierarchy. When the hierarchy is abolished, the titles of *Master* and *Slave* sublimate into each other, annihilating the content that each supposes, and *Self-Consciousness* arises. Hegel explains, "...just as lordship showed that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness."⁴⁸

As Freedom is defined as that which is not dependent on anything external to itself, and the teleological end of Spirit's motion is Freedom, it follows that when *Master* and *Slave* recognize each other, each attains Freedom in independent, *Self-Consciousness*. The *Master*, too, was a slave all along based on his participation in a social relation which is mediated by *things*. Consciousness by itself is a precursor for self-consciousness, but *Self-Consciousness* does not necessarily *come-to-be* given that consciousness is found in the world. It necessarily requires two conscious individuals entering into definite social relations which are mediated through things wherein each participant is dependent on each other participant in a one-sided way.

For Hegel, *Self-Consciousness* cannot arise in a vacuum with a single conscious being; on the contrary, it requires two conscious beings entering into social relations which are mediated by *things* such that they are alienated from their own essence (*labor*). When we ask ourselves if Marx is working within the Hegelian *Weltanschauung*, it is obvious that the answer is a resounding 'yes'. So much so, that it is far more than a simple analogous comparison: Marx's framework in which he explains the nature of the Capitalist mode of production throughout his work is essentially Hegelian. The *Proletariat* and *Bourgeoisie* enter into definite social relations which are mediated by things, ultimately leading to the exploitation of the working class such that they are alienated not only from the products of their *labor*—which both Hegel and Marx assert is the abstract essence of humankind—but are also alienated from *themselves* as species-beings. Ultimately, I am calling into question a general presupposition shared by the majority of Marxist thinkers throughout recent history: *Class Consciousness* is generally considered to be a species of or synonym for *class-awareness*. This awareness is treated as obtainable by an individual who comes to understand the material conditions and the nature of the social relations which comprise the structure of capitalism; often, it is assumed to be an awareness that only the working class can obtain.

It follows that the *coming-to-be* of *Class Consciousness* also requires more than an individual becoming aware of the material conditions of their own class or the social relations that are imposed on them by capital. It is never enough for the *Slave* to become aware that he is participating in a social relation mediated through *things*.⁴⁹ This claim comes along with an underlying assumption about Marx's goals as

⁴⁸ Hegel, *PS*: §192.

⁴⁹ See footnote 26; as a continuation of this claim, Hegel argues that the *Master* and *Slave* continuously recognize each other at different moments throughout the *Dialectic*; it is their failure to recognize each other as equals. When pivoting to Marx, it seems

regards his writing at all: it was not his purpose to raise *Class Consciousness*⁵⁰ in those individuals who read his work or understand his theoretical posits as regards Capitalist tendencies. Marxist tradition can be thought of as a kind of nested set of teleological ends. The final end, as previously discussed, is the end of History. That is, the abolishment of the social structure outlined in *Capital*—on my view, this ultimate end is represented as *Class Consciousness coming-to-be*. In aiming at this end, I argue that Marx is working within the material conditions available to rally the working class to unite against the Bourgeoisie in world-wide revolution.

If the preceding claims are true, it would be irrational to assume that *Class-Consciousness*—in the relevant or meaningful sense which is equivalent to the Hegelian Freedom or the end of History—can be transferred via some set of facts about the material conditions of the hierarchy in which the Proletariat resides.⁵¹ Otherwise, why would Marx go on to suggest that the Proletariat intentionally guide history through revolution?⁵² Simultaneously, contra Hegel who foresees in his work that the teleological ends of Spirit will necessarily obtain, a historical determinist would not suggest that History could be altered by revolution. Given the scope of theoretical exposition that *Capital* contains, it follows from my claims about Marx's nested teleology that his primary goal is to inspire those who already experience the exploitation and alienation of the social relations of capital to action in light of unveiling the theoretical workings of the Capitalist mode of production. In short, he is attempting to force the hand of History in favor of the Proletariat by gesturing towards the conditions that must be met for the synthesis of the Bourgeoisie/Proletariat Dialectic to occur.

As I have shown, for the meaningful sense of *Class Consciousness* to *come-to-be*, the Bourgeoisie/Proletariat Dialectic must meet the conditions for its synthesis, and History will have come to an end. As discussed in the Master/Slave Dialectic, there are two dimensions to the synthesis of a Dialectic and the sublation of the contents of the thesis and the antithesis into each other: one ontological, and one linguistic. The phenomenological aspect is that which manifests in each when they become Free.

On the ontological side, *Class Consciousness* only *comes-to-be* when the totality of the members of each class recognize that they are equals in terms of their inherent essence: their *labor* is equitable in the abstract, and treat each other as such. The linguistic aspect of the *coming-to-be* of *Class Consciousness* is the sublation of the titles of Proletariat and Bourgeoisie into each other such that both relinquish their senses or meanings. This will occur in tandem with the ontological sublation that follows the synthesis of the Bourgeoisie/Proletariat Dialectic, same as with the Master/Slave Dialectic.

It is now be clear that Marx is working within the Hegelian mode of thought as regards the synthesis of *Class Consciousness*. This comparison shows that *Class Consciousness* is more than an analog of *Self-Consciousness* in Hegel; it represents a similar teleological goal in the end of History, a similar analysis of a set of social relations which are mediated through *things*, and an almost identical phenomenological stance. *Class Consciousness* is not a description of an awareness of one's own individual position in the social hierarchy of the capitalist mode of production, but ought to be described as an effect of the synthesis,

obvious that the members of the Proletariat and the Bourgeoisie recognize each other at every moment throughout the B/P Dialectic, as they are dependent upon each other given their social relation.

⁵⁰ Marx does not himself use the term. I mean to say that he did not intend to raise awareness as an *end*.

⁵¹ Marx, *Communist Manifesto*:41. When discussing the literature which comes before him—the Critical-Utopian literature—he explains that, "...these Socialist and Communist writings [though failures of prescription] contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Hence they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class." Given this claim, I conclude that Marx argues that the facts of the conditions in which the Proletariat reside cannot be alone *per se*. The knowledge of the class antagonism is not sufficient for the enlightenment of the working class. This phenomenological claim is reminiscent of the answer to the question, "What is it like to see red?". There is a sense in which the material facts about 'redness' cannot contain the answer to the phenomenological question.

⁵² Marx, *Communist Manifesto*: 44. "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution."

sublation, and abolishment of the class structure and social relation mediated through things and not people imposed by capital. In leaning on this comparison of Marx's Bourgeoisie/Proletariat Dialectic with Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic, we can dialectically derive the primary goals of Marx's work as well as the Proletariat in a meaningful way.

There are only two methods by which the end of History can occur: either (a) through the empathy of the Bourgeoisie such that they agree, for ethical reasons, to cease the exploitation of the working class—a possibility that Marx never considers due to the nature of the vampiric beast that is the Capitalist mode of production—or (b) through revolution of the Proletariat such that they refuse to participate in the social relations of this penultimate mode of production wherein they are exploited. In a sense, either action will be causally efficacious as regards the *coming-to-be* of *Class Consciousness* and bringing about the end of History. It is obvious, however, that Marx rejects the possibility of option (a). If (b) is the only feasible option, then it cannot be enough for an individual or small collective of individuals to understand the working conditions of the system; a battle-to-the-death must ensue—a violent revolution.

Once this revolution occurs, if the Proletariat is successful, the Capitalist mode grinds to a halt. This does not mean that production ceases. The means of production are seized by the working class, and if Lenin's interpretation is correct, the society moves toward the first level of a Post-Capitalist society. This lower-tier Post-Capitalist society can be thought of as a 'Proletariat Dictatorship'. During this transfer of power from the Bourgeoisie to the Proletariat, the class structure goes on existing with altered social relations. That is, the Bourgeoisie is no longer a vampiric class that exploits the Proletariat by sucking the life blood from their labor power. This lower-tier Post-Capitalist society would not come along with sufficient conditions for *Class Consciousness* to arise, however. Counter-intuitively, the proper conditions for *Class Consciousness* come along when there is no awareness of class whatsoever. The possibility for the awareness of class is a limiting factor as regards *Class Consciousness*. It is only once Proletariat and Bourgeoisie sublimate into each other, eliminating the titles of each, and they return back to their inherently equal status that *Class Consciousness* comes to be.

As noted in the first paragraph of this essay, the contents of *Class Consciousness* contain a subjective stance that cannot be accounted for by some totality of objective facts about the highest-tier Post-Capitalist society. *Class Consciousness*, in this sense, contains the answer to the question, 'What is it like to live in a classless society?'. There is an equitable consideration when comparing *Class Consciousness* in a Marxist framework to *Self-Consciousness* in a Hegelian context. *Self-Consciousness* contains the answer to the question, 'What is it like for an individual to have a sense of self?'. What is important as regards the answer to both of these questions is—in true Hegelian fashion—we can get a sense of the answers to the question by considering that which cannot be contained in that answer.

For *Self-Consciousness*, the lack of awareness of one's self is not contained in the answer. That is to say, once a creature is *Self-Consciousness*, they lack the ability to reflect on what it would be like to be a conscious creature that lacks *Self-Consciousness*. There is no going back, in the phenomenological sense. Similarly with *Class Consciousness*, the answer to the question, 'What is it like to be a member of the Proletariat?' is not contained within its contents. *Class Consciousness*, then, cannot arise in any individual who has been a member of a class during the Capitalist mode of production. In opposition to the situation with the Master and Slave, who *gain* a sense of awareness, and *add* to their phenomenological toolbox, members of the Proletariat and Bourgeoisie will never gain *Class Consciousness*.

Once one has been a member of either class during the Capitalist mode of production, they will always know the answer to the question, 'What is it like to be a member of a class?'. Knowing the answer

to this question—an answer which is necessarily subjective⁵³—removes one from the possibility of obtaining *Class Consciousness* in the mature sense as I have been discussing it. *Class Consciousness*, then, requires two conditions: The precursor of the Capitalist mode of production being a world-wide phenomenon, and being an individual who is born into the world after the Proletariat has successfully overthrown the Bourgeoisie. It follows from my claims that the Proletariat is not uniting against the Bourgeoisie for their own well-being, but that of their children or grandchildren. Phenomenologically, *Class Consciousness* requires the lack of having ever been labeled as a member of a class, as well as having never experienced the ontological conditions of the class antagonism in one's life.

⁵³ Necessarily subjective in the sense that one must have the experience of belonging to a class. One cannot learn the answer to the question without having stood in some subjective relationship to the phenomenological content.

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