

*Korsch in Spain*  
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*Karl Korsch O el Nacimiento de una Nueva Epoca.* Editorial Anagrama: Barcelona, 1973. 144 pages.

That a scholarly anthology dealing with the work of Karl Korsch could be published in Spain under present conditions of dictatorship is a politically significant event foreshadowing future explosive developments in the Iberian peninsula. In fact, nothing comparable is available even in the English-speaking world.(1) notwithstanding a certain revival of interest in Hegelian Marxism in the wake of the politicization resulting from the opposition to the Vietnam war and the rise of the New Left in the 1960s. It indicates the existence in Spain of an ongoing process of theoretical preparation for the time when Franco passes away, taking with him the remnants of an era long since gone in the rest of Europe. This may prevent the kind of chaos brought about in a politically unprepared Portugal by the military coup.

While there is no doubt that Spain and Portugal are on the threshold of "the birth of a new epoch," it is altogether unclear what the character of this new epoch will be. As postulated by most Marxist theories, *outright* fascism and Stalinism have turned out to be historically *transitional* phenomena. For most of the West after World War II the transition culminated with the internalization and institutionalization of repressive mechanisms in advanced capitalism, and in the East, into a much cruder and less efficient bureaucratic collectivism. Yet, the real question in the Iberian peninsula today is whether to become economically and politically integrated with the rest of Western Europe, or develop a new type of social organization along the lines roughly prefigured by council communists in the 1930s or the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in the 1940s and 1950s: a socialism free of capitalist as well as *bureaucratic* domination. (2)

Notwithstanding the Portuguese military's flirtation with the Communist Party, today there is very little chance in Spain and Portugal for the development of an Eastern European variety of bureaucratic collectivism. The Portuguese Communist Party's ideological backwardness even *vis-a-vis* other Western European Communist Parties, and the total bankruptcy of the Russian statist model-periodically impressed on world consciousness through the smashing of revolutionary developments such as in 1956 Hungary and 1968 Czechoslovakia-makes this model altogether unsuitable as a real alternative to the obsolescent fascist state.(3)

It is precisely this state of affairs that makes this book all the more relevant since it presents a Marxism irreducible to any of the institutionalized travesties in power in allegedly "socialist" societies. Korsch, in fact, was one of the first and few to seriously challenge the Bolshevik model from a rigorous Marxist perspective while seeking a radical alternative to both the social-democratic as well as the Stalinist or bureaucratic collectivist model. His *Anti-Kautsky* and the 1930 Introduction to *Marxism and Philosophy* remain two of the most systematic and thorough-going critiques of Kautsky (social democracy) and Lenin (Bolshevism). What was original in Korsch's critiques, which distinguished them from all others and remains the kernel of his theoretical heritage, was that they employed the very same arguments to show both social democracy and Bolshevism as representing opposite sides of a fundamentally similar bourgeois consciousness. By presenting the materialist conception of history as an *objective* science above class interests and divisions, Kautsky had not only distorted the revolutionary meaning of the dialectic and de-politicized Marxism, but also used it to chain "the proletarian struggle to the ideas and objectives of the bourgeois class." (4) For Korsch *theory* avoids becoming *ideology* only to the extent that it mediates human activity and political struggles. Once it is severed from the historical subjects who are to concretely objectify it as *praxis*, and is presented as an objective and contemplative reflection of being, it automatically turns precisely into the kind of ideological mystification that its neutrality and objectivity sought to avoid. The same thing happens with Lenin as presented by Stalin and his followers who "universally transfer the dialectic into Object, Nature and History and who present knowledge merely as a passive mirror and reflection of this objective Being in the subjective Consciousness. In so doing they destroy both the dialectical interrelation of *being* and *consciousness* and, as a necessary consequence, the dialectical

interrelation of *theory* and *practice*." This results in the "complete abandonment of Marx's dialectical materialism and a retreat to a totally abstract opposition of pure *theory*, which discovers truths, to pure *practice*, which applies these laboriously discovered truths to reality." (5)

With Lukacs, Korsch also identified *objectivism*, in the guise of commodity fetishism, as the "*specific* problem of our age, the age of modern capitalism. "(6) Unlike Lukacs,(7) however, he did not pose the problem in terms of a tendential subject-object identity which, within the universalized fragmentation of bourgeois society, could be realized only by a party whose primacy and *substitutional* character was a necessary consequence of the whole-part dialectic whereby the proletariat, as the *active* part of the totality of mankind, acts for that totality, and the party, as the active part of the proletariat, does the same for the proletariat. (8)By regarding as theory *that knowledge which concretely mediates activity*, rather than as an attribute of a future, all-encompassing collective consciousness imparting the status of historical validity to all of those previous consciously undertaken steps toward the final reconciliation (as in Lukacs), Korsch sought to place Marxism on a rigorous *subjective* basis by tying it to the class struggle that it was to mediate, while at the same time expose all *objectivistic* versions as theoretical capitulations to bourgeois consciousness. In this respect, Eduardo Subirats, the editor of the anthology, is on the right track in introducing this re-examination of the Korschian project as "the poetry of the revolution of the future which will recognize no other time and space than the subjective, and no imperative other than the oceanic passion of man to become the master of history" (p. 9). In an historical juncture full of possibilities such as the present Spanish context, it is crucial to demystify "the cursed history of the labor movement from Kronstadt to the 1937 Revolution." To the extent that "Korsch's work appears negatively as the liquidation of the previous false consciousness of the European labor movement," the critical reception of his work will constitute an unavoidable starting point for "the reflection on the historical alternatives on radical emancipation" (p. 12).

With the exception of an article by Vacca and two texts by Korsch himself, all of the rest of the contributions to the anthology come from two issues of *Politikon* (9) Particularly relevant are the essays by Mattick, Negt and Rusconi. Given the fact that Mattick was one of Korsch's closest collaborators during the years in exile, it is understandable why he is the author of the opening essay, which tries to provide an overall account of Korsch's work. After retracing the path of Korsch's break with "orthodox" Marxism and with Leninism, Mattick locates the tragedy of a thinker and militant who strongly believed that revolutionary "Marxism can exist only if united with the revolutionary movement of the working people" (p. 15), while forced to operate for the rest of his life outside of such a movement.

Mattick can write with first-hand knowledge on this theme, since Korsch's predicament is also *his own*. Yet, a rather different starting point and a subsequent different conception of Marxism prevents Mattick from fully understanding the logic of the development of Korsch's thought-which explains why he remained a Marxist and Korsch did not. In terms of the very logic of the Korschian discourse, council communism as Korsch formulated it, necessarily deteriorated to the level of an ideology after the 1926 break with the Communist Party, and only the hope of eventually reconciling the theory of *Linkskommunismus* with the practice of the working class made the theoretical efforts of the council communists at all legitimate in Korsch's own vision. The persistence in analyzing the Stalinist phenomenon as a variant of state-capitalism and equivalent to Fascism' (10) prevented the grounding of Marxism in the Cornintern-instrumentalized "world labor movement" and necessitated either a new theoretical grounding of Marxism, or its abandonment. Of course, Korsch and the council communists regarded the Bolshevik phenomenon as transitory as social democracy, and to be swept aside by the working class after the newly developed state-capitalism would confront labor as a unit, thus triggering class consciousness and the final confrontation. (11) Only after World War Two did Korsch gradually come to relegate Marxism as the thought form of a bygone age when "the transition" began to appear much more permanent than expected. What is significant, however-a point most critics miss-is that Korsch eventually came to de-emphasize Marxism by remaining firm on the most fundamental tenet of his whole outlook. i.e., the analysis of *knowledge as concrete mediation*. His very analysis of the developments of Marx's own theory postulated a unity of forms of being and forms of thought which remained his theoretical trademark. As he put it in the very last pages of his *Karl Marx*. reiterating a major thesis of *Marxism and Philosophy*: "A genetic presentation would show with what precision and at the same time with what weight every new phase of the real history of society, every new experience of the proletarian struggle. is reflected in each turn of the theoretical

development of Marx's doctrine .... To be instrumental to the historical movement of our time is the great purpose of Marx." (12) In other words, genuine theory is such *only* in its instrumentality to the class struggle. It is precisely this argument which in the Zurich theses (1950) led Korsch away from Marxism: "It is now altogether meaningless to ask to what an extent the doctrine of Marx and Engels is in the present epoch theoretically relevant and practically applicable ... The first step to be taken, in order to put together a revolutionary theory and practice, consists in breaking with Marxism." (13 )

Whereas Korsch remained faithful to the logic of his theoretical perspective, Mattick, who had never shared its fundamental assumptions and had never been an Hegelian Marxist, did not find it at all difficult to remain unmoved with an analysis whose foundation has long since been washed away by the erosion of new historical events. It may very well be true that, as he put it, "all of the capitalist contradictions remain intact and require an alternative completely different from the one offered by capitalism" (p, 43). Yet, his *outmeriste* perspective ends up missing all of the significant mediations, thus leaving his account as a mere act of faith in a Rip van Winkle proletariat to be awakened into action by the eventual reassertion of the unsolvable capitalist crisis in the wake of the exhaustion of the Keynesian solution: "If revolutionary consciousness depends on misery, there can be little doubt that the suffering awaiting the world's population will go beyond anything thus far experienced and that it will eventually engulf even the privileged minority of workers in the industrially advanced countries who still think of themselves as immune from the consequences of their own activities." (14) Thus, from the very first introductory essay to *Council Correspondence* in 1934 (15) to his *Marx and Keynes*, Mattick remains immersed in the classical Marxist perspective of the *Communist Manifesto* where emiseration and class polarization function as the fundamental determinants of the proletarian revolution: "The ruling class is the decision-making class; the other class, regardless of its inner differentiations, is at the mercy of these decisions, which are made with a view to the special needs of capital and determine the general conditions of society."(16) Of course, Mattick is well aware of the major social developments resulting from the shift from competitive, entrepreneurial capitalism to the monopoly stage, but he does not think that they make much of a difference and, far from stabilizing the old contradictions, they intensify them: accordingly, today "the capitalist world is far more unstable, disorganized, and disintegrated than it was, say, fifty years ago. The current mix of free and controlled market relations, instead of making for greater order, exclude both the automatic and 'controlled' integration of both the national and the world economy." (17) There is no alienation, no culture, no administration of everyday life in this account: the economic dimension is the only one that maners.(18)

Korsch had also shared this perspective whereby "Marx's materialist social science is not sociology, but economics." (19) Yet, he did not accept any of the current accounts of the *Zusammenbruchstheorie*. He rejected all other earlier variations of the Marxist theory of the crash as passive reflections of earlier confrontations wholly unable to affect political activity, and saw any such theory as a kind of Sorelian myth, having a similarly fictitious pragmatic validity.(20) As Rusconi has pointed out, however, a version of the theory of the crash was present in Korsch from the very beginning of the council period when, according to him, "the scientific necessity of socialism results from the impossibility of reconciling a capitalist economy and a socialist policy." (21) Thus, the "*Praktischer Sozialismus*" that he put forth in an article by the same title (22) was conceived as a concrete alternative both to socialism as a pure science which saw capitalism as naturally giving way to socialism (which Second International thinkers such as the Austro-Marxists-particularly Hilferding - contraposed to Marxism as an ethical ideal) (23) and that reformism which sought to carry out a socialist policy within 'a market economy. Unlike earlier versions of the theory of the crash such as Luxemburg's which saw it as a result of the exhaustion of areas in which capitalism could expand,(24) Korsch saw it as a result of the impossibility of instituting a *social policy* within a capitalist economy. (25) Rather than stressing objective factors such as economic laws, Korsch (along with Gramsci and Lukacs) focused on the will and conscious human activity as bringing about that socialization which capitalism could not otherwise institute on a long-term basis. Fascism, Stalinism, or state capitalism in general, were seen as *transitory* capitalist solutions which could, at best, only postpone the socialist outcome. Unlike Mattick, however, Korsch posed this whole problematic within a dogmatically-accepted Hegelian-Marxist framework which, as we shall see, did not allow for any radical reconstitution and eventually forced him to abandon Marxism altogether.

As early as 1919, Korsch had posed the problem of revolution not in economic terms but, along with

other council theoreticians such as Gramsci, (26) in terms of a culturally and spiritually "new humanity." (27) Within such a perspective, what justifies and at the same time necessitates revolution is not just misery or exploitation, or even insurmountable economic contradictions, but the fact that *Geist* manifests itself as *teleological human activity* (praxis) and capitalism both requires the fulfillment of this spirituality because of its needs for *functioning subjectivity* (living labor) to guarantee accumulation, while unable to accept the society of subjects that it prefigures because of its class character and the principle of domination whose retention is the primary goal of the bourgeois state. Although, as has been pointed out, (28) Korsch's whole problematic of socialization during the council period up to the writing of *Marxism and Philosophy* was too abstract and theoretically deficient, it does not take much imagination to see how it could readily lean in an Hegelian Marxist direction. And such a development explains his posing of the question of epistemology in the way that he did.

Within Hegelian Marxism, knowledge tends toward collective self-consciousness in the classless society in the form of a subject-object identity where all concrete *social individuals* who are such precisely because they are all subjects who produce and, consequently, share common interests, collectively determine the dynamics of a social whole in which, for the first time, freedom can be automatically translated into necessity. In a class society, however, knowledge becomes specified as classconsciousness and comes to express particular class interests in universal disguises. The historical validity of the proletarian perspective is solely a result of its objective goal of genuine universality through the abolition of classes altogether and, consequently, the realization of a society of subjects. Within specific contexts of transition, the problem becomes one of how to carry out the transition (organization) and of what mediations (consciousness) to develop in a situation of rapidly declining bourgeois domination. Strangely enough, however, as Ceppa has pointed out, (29) in Korsch-either during the council period or during the American exile-there is no theory of ideology or of organization, which is a result of his particular understanding of the dialectic. Whereas other council communists-turned-Hegelian-Marxists such as Lukács and Gramsci developed highly sophisticated theories of alienation and of ideology, no counterpart is to be found in Korsch. His short-circuiting of the dialectic between appearance and reality led him to analyze ideologies as immediate expressions of given socio-historical situations and to collapse the problem of organization into the always already given class struggle automatically generated by the capitalist organization of labor. According to Ceppa, "the confusion between the *abstract-real* level of the logical-cognitive moment and the *empirical* level of genetic determinations-e i.e., the lack of a distinction between the synthetic-dialectical moment of exposition (*Darstellungsweise*) and the analytic moment of empirical research (*Forschungsweise*) - brings about in Korsch the collapsing of the *dialectical* problematic of historical 'constitution' into the *positivist* problematic of 'empirical' specification, with the result of reaching-through Kurt Lewin - a kind of paradoxical alliance between Hegel and Wittgenstein." (30)

Although from as early as 1924 Korsch unqualifiedly defended the dialectic against people such as Thalheimer who "hold that the question of 'scientific' method has been resolved once and for all through the empirical method of the natural sciences and the corresponding historical-positive method of the social sciences," by pointing out how this method is "the *specifically bourgeois method* of scientific research," (31) his own elaboration did not succeed in working out a radical alternative. His claim that "only an idealist dialectician could attempt to free the totality of the forms of thought (determinations, categories)-which we partly apply consciously in praxis, in science and in philosophy, but which also penetrate our spirit in an unconscious and instructive way-from the object of intuition, imagination and desire in which they are usually embroiled, in order to consider them as if they were a particular object in itself" (32) over-historicized the dialectic. It allowed no free play whatsoever between forms of thought and forms of being. In the dialectic between universal and particular, the former can only manifest itself through the latter without, however, being thereby reduced to it. The defense of the autonomy of theory, or of the irreducibility of the universal to the particular which became the *leitmotif* of Adorno's crusade against identity theory, (33) is the very precondition for the kind of historical specification of theory which Korsch sought to carry out. Historical specification is possible only within a *constituted* a-historical framework which, however, does not obtain in any transcendental dimension, but lives and breathes with the subjects who continually *re-constitute* it precisely in order to concretely specify their praxis. The historical makes sense only within the a-historical which, however, is always a theoretical construction in need of constant reconstitution in order to allow adequate historical specification. This Gramscian "absolute

historicism" (34) neither shuns practice, thus becoming, as in Adorno, a monumental justification for its own political impotence,(35) nor does it collapse into an equally impotent pragmatism as in Korsch, but attempts to locate *objective historical Possibilities* (36) and thus attempts to intervene in the historical process.

Identity theory is the cancer that consumes Korsch's dialectic: the lack of any theoretical preventive medicine such as a critical perspective on science, leads him to a strange and eventually embarrassing interpretation which resulted in the wholesale de-inflation of the Marxist perspective. As early as 1920 he had put forth a very pragmatic account of science. He wrote: "Science anticipates the social reality which is about to assert itself, and precisely through this intellectual anticipation of the future, it poses one of the conditions for the creative overcoming from the old to the new forms of individual and social being." (37) Exactly the same argument applies to the materialist dialectic which he sees as "an immanent and real component of revolutionary proletarian praxis." (38) Marxism and the dialectic are consequently not grounded in praxis but, like science, in determinate historical conditions: they are necessary reflections of objectively given socio-economic conditions. When the mediation fails to mediate, Korsch has to give it up. His inability or unwillingness to recognize any theoretical autonomy to the dialectic has the dialectical consequence of preventing Korsch from actually determining historical specificity, and his Marxism thereby takes a metaphysical turn.

Notwithstanding the fact that Mattick remained an orthodox Marxist and Korsch did not, both shared an interpretation of Marxist theory which, as Oskar Negt put it in what is probably the best essay in the anthology being reviewed, ended up being "a monumental transcendental philosophy whose fundamental categories do not change" (p. 103). The absence of a theory of science and of the problematic of constitution (which, in many respects, amounts to the same thing) eventually led Korsch to present historical materialism as "an empirical and scientific method with which to penetrate the '*eidola*' standing in the way of unbiased research, and to determine 'with the precision of natural science' the real subject matter hidden behind the interminable confusion of 'ideological' disguises." (39) Its claims, therefore, could be empirically verified as in any other science. It is no wonder that Korsch in his later years earned himself a reputation as a positivist. Unlike Gramsci who unambiguously located all science and knowledge at the level of the superstructure, (40) or the old Lukacs who in an equally unambiguous way fixed science in the dubious Stalinist "infrastructure." (41) Korsch never resolved the problem of science other than, as already indicated, by postulating a unity of theory and practice.

*It* is precisely this postulation of the tendential unity of theory and practice which had given rise in *Marxism and Philosophy* to the periodization of Marxism and provided Korsch with a key to interpreting the misadventures of Marxism from 1848 to the 1920s. According to such a periodization, Marxism reached a high theoretical level in the works of Marx and Engels while it was the intellectual production of a very restricted number of intellectuals politically engaged in the revolutionary wave which ended in 1850. After that, the separation between Marx's and Engels' rapidly developing theory and the swelling of the workers' movement resulted in a broadening of the base but with a lower theoretical level-German social democracy.(42) Only in the third stage, through the political maturation of the working class and the development of revolutionary situations was it possible for Marxist theory to become once again *concrete mediation*. Whereas during the pre-1926 period Korsch stressed the primacy of theory over political practice (Leninism) which explains the degeneration of the Second International in terms of *lack of correct political theory*, after his break with the party, presumably through the influence of the council communists with whom he worked closely, theoretical shortcomings came to be explained in terms of the *immaturity of objective conditions*. As Ceppa has put it, after his break with the party, "the polemics against Kautsky and against Lenin are never 'genuine' polemics, but rather the rigorous demonstration of the historical necessity of their ideological limitations." (43) And even when Korsch began to question some of Marx's views, these shortcomings were explained as "unavoidable under the circumstances out of which Marx's materialist social research arose." (44) In a nutshell, as already indicated, Korsch had no meaningful theory of ideology.(45) This led him to draw too close a parallel between reified forms of thought and reified forms of being, so that, as Negt points out, "in spite of his intention, elements of the theory of reflection" reappeared in his analysis (p. 99). "Precision," "verification," "laws," etc., became part of his vocabulary, while his outlook did not really undergo much of a change.

The eventual disenchantment with Marxism occurred when it became clear to him that the class struggle could no longer be adequately mediated by what he understood as Marxism and which he saw as too inextricably rooted in a 19th-century social context. Mattick, who had never been an Hegelian and, therefore, did not have Korsch's theoretical commitment to the unity of social being and social thought, had no problem in remaining a Marxist. The explanation of Korsch's political tragedy, however, is not to be sought, unconsciously following official party interpretations,(46) in his "isolation from the workers' movement," but in his inadequate critique of *objectivism* which, as Negt has put it, led him to insist on "the restoration of the practice-revolutionary content of the authentic philosophy of Marxism through the program of applying historical materialism to its own history" (p. 95). The failure to vindicate the autonomy of theory takes its toll. Thus, in spite of himself, Korsch ends up uncritically carrying out a mechanical transposition of theoretical mediations onto the level of metaphysics which, in restoring the original character of Marxist theory, also remained an expression of its original context, thus trapping Korsch within a perspective which, under the new conditions of advanced capitalism, had very little chance of being politically viable.

Following Krahl, who against Habermas' trivialization of praxis into instrumental and symbolic interaction, vindicated the phenomenological problematic of constitution.V Negt shows how Korsch fell victim to objectivism by restricting himself within the dimension of the "already constituted," thus losing the critical thrust of Marx and Engels-and even of Kant's philosophy (pp. 100-101). This is why economics becomes the only viable Marxist sociology and "his theory breaks up in two parts which in Korsch's work co-existed with unequal importance (47) Thus, "on the one hand elements of contemplative materialism come to the fore in relation to the particular empirical sciences, while on the other, and in contra position to it, Marxist theory is converted into the theory of class struggle" (p. 101).(48) The reification of historical materialism into a formal method de-nistoricizes its structure and forces the content to be dealt with as preconstituted and as already given. This is why Korsch "obstructs the road that could have led him to a lively development of Marxist theory" (p. 103), and, notwithstanding the fact that he has been classified as a "fanatic of historical specification," Negt concludes that in Korsch there is not even one "specific and material analysis carried out under the sign of his theoretical vindication" (p. 104).

These theoretical shortcomings translate into major political problems when in the 1930s Korsch sought to provide an analysis of new socio-economic developments and devise a political strategy adequate to them. Thus, the realization of the bourgeois character of both social-democracy and Bolshevism, combined with the attempted thematization of the capitalist overcoming of its *laissez-faire* or competitive phase (49) led him and other council communists to formulate the thesis of state capitalism and to eventually foresee the imminent fascistization of the world .(50) But these changes in socio-economic *content* do not find a corresponding change in the theoretical *form* meant to mediate these very changes in a revolutionary direction. Far from re- examining the base-superstructure distinction along the lines of, e.g., critical theory, where the shift from entrepreneurial to monopoly capitalism finds its theoretical expression in the collapse of base and superstructure and the subsequent thematization of the integrational function of the culture industry (51) or of the internalization of capitalist mechanisms within the very structure of personality, (52) Korsch remains firm within the reified version of a Marxism rooted in entrepreneurial capitalism. As a result, his penetrating insights into social developments in the 1930s lead him to predict the political recomposition of the working class and the coming of the final revolutionary confrontations. (53) When subsequent developments falsified such a prediction, Korsch could not undertake the necessary theoretical reconstitution of Marxism and had to abandon it altogether.

The Korschian lesson, therefore, is primarily negative and, presumably, its function within the present Spanish context is essentially to prevent a repetition of the errors of the past. Marxism must be grounded in *praxis*, but at the same time it must not be identified as a mere pragmatic mediation nor reduced to an expression of sociohistorical conditions. After the 1930s and the advent of fascism, Stalinism or, more generally, the more recent forms of totally administered society, the working class has been systematically prevented from fulfilling the role assigned to it by Hegelian Marxists. The politicization of economics and its instrumentalization to guarantee the class compromise typical of the whole post-World War II period checkmates the Hegelian Marxist project of radicalizing Marxism and wresting it away from the bureaucratized travesties of the Second and Third Internationals. What becomes impossible is precisely the grounding of a radical politics on the proletariat as its collective

subject. The penetration of capitalist relations into every feature of everyday life and the bureaucratic administration of every dimension of existence meant the collapse of the classical distinction of base and superstructure and, as Horkheimer showed as early as 1940,(54) the end of traditional party politics. The sharp social contradictions previously separating the classes into potentially warring factions were now mediated by massive economic and cultural state interventions to the point that all traditional forms of opposition were automatically integrated to strengthen precisely the system against which they struggled. But to the extent that the fundamental contradictions remained and the main thrust of the system was to retain unchanged prevailing social relations of domination, conflict not only reappeared in new guises in other hitherto unproblematic areas, but came to be recognized as a necessary and ineliminable element in guaranteeing the stability and continued viability of the system. Thus, through a diabolical reversal, the permanent state of crisis in advanced capitalism is not a symptom of terminal social disease, but a further expression of its deeper liveliness. The task of the ruling apparatus is no longer to *solve* crises, but to *manage* them in a way functional to further capitalist development.

These developments in advanced capitalism defuse the revolutionary charge of all earlier Marxist theory but, unlike Korsch who was unable to historically ground and re-constitute Marxism and therefore had to look elsewhere for revolutionary theory, or Mattick, who lacked even Korsch's good sense to notice the inapplicability of traditional Marxist categories to the changed conditions of capitalist domination and who thus continues into the 1970s to forcibly interpret a new reality in terms of the old discredited schema, it need not mean the end of Marxism. One of the fundamental tenets of any truly dialectical outlook is the inseparability of form and content. Thus, the changed conditions of advanced capitalism necessitate a radical reconstitution of Marxist theory such as was carried out in the 1930s and 1940s by the Frankfurt School in the wake of Pollock's work on planning (55) with the result that, with the full politicization of the economy, the emphasis shifts onto culture and the new legitimization crises which arise in the new context.<sup>(56)</sup>

The eclipse of the problematic of the *collective subject* also meant the exhaustion of Hegelian Marxism. In this respect, the fate of Korsch, Lukacs, Gramsci and the Frankfurt School is indicative of the various historical options for a viable contemporary Marxism. With the exception of Lukacs, who chose very early the bureaucratic solution, and Gramsci, who did not live to confront the consequences of the failures of his brand of Marxism, Korsch and Adorno are typical cases. Korsch's retreat went through American empirical science whose character completely baffled him ,(57) while Adorno went back to a bourgeois individuality which advanced capitalism was rapidly exterminating and whose preservation became one of the main concerns of his later works. Neither of these alternatives are satisfactory.

If a retreat has to be made, however, then it may well be to what in 1937 Marcuse derisively called the last bourgeois perspective (58) at a time in which he still hung onto the belief in the possibility of a radical transformation along classical Marxist lines before the coming of the World War II holocaust. The return to the phenomenological problematic is the only salvation for the spirit of Hegelian Marxism. Within it, the communist ideal of a society of free subjects does not take on the character of an unattainable Kantian ideal as in Adorno, but can be grounded, through absolute historicism, in a long-range political project. In a context within which wage-labor is systematically prevented from ever becoming praxis and thus making it possible for the "class in itself" to become the "class for itself," praxis itself becomes anarchist and, more than ever, transcends these class lines which have long since ceased to make much of a difference in terms of revolutionary consciousness. What this means in terms of the practical problem of societies such as Spain and Portugal in the process of undergoing a major transition, is that the old third-internationalist Marxist rhetoric can only be an obstacle to political and social emancipation: meaningful solutions will have to be created independently of past projections. As in the case of the council phenomenon which is the real historical experience that gave rise to the Hegelian Marxism of the 1920s, the new theoretical perspective will have to come from the new experiences of the transition period by settling the account with the theoretical debris of the past.

Precisely because of their therapeutic theoretical function, books such as *Karl Korsch O el Nacimiento de una Nueva Epoca* are a welcome sight-especially given their place of publication. Of course, the choice of the essays could have been better: Buckmiller's polemic against Negt adds very little to the

understanding of either Korsch or the present theoretical and revolutionary tasks, while Rusconi's attempted comparison of Korsch, Gramsci and Bordiga does not go much beyond showing that differences of perspectives within the *Linkskommunismus* opposition, which "prevented that extraordinary personalities [such as Korsch and Bordiga] could come together in an effective common action" (p. 80). Presumably written much earlier than most of his first-rate work on these topics, Rusconi's essay fails to investigate the full wealth of the left opposition-something that remains yet to be done. (59) Yet, the choice of Korsch's "Crisis of Marxism" (1931),(60) and "The Young Marx as an Activist Philosopher" (1934) shows excellent judgment, which the editor will hopefully exercise again in other similarly useful anthologies.

## Notes

1. Of course, there is no chance whatsoever for an anthology of this type to come out in Russia. One of the reasons why such an anthology could be published in Spain under conditions of dictatorship at least as stringent as in Russia may be the violent anti-Bolshevik character of most of the essays- and Korsch's work as well. Yet, if one recalls that in Spain the most powerful radical force in the 1930s was not Bolshevism but a variety of anarcho-communism very close to Korsch's vision, the publication of the anthology appears all the more politically explosive. The publisher may have printed it as a result of lingering pre-Franco political sympathies, while the censors may have approved it because of its general anti-Bolshevik thrust. In the United States even the recent republication of all the issues of *Council Correspondence*, *Living Marxism*, and *New Essays* by Greenwood Publishing Co. (Westport, Conn., 1971), has remained practically unnoticed although there are many points of contact between the Marxism of the New Left and Council Communism. Cf. Stanley Aronowitz, "Left-Wing Communism: The Answer to Lenin," in Dick Howard and Karl Klare, eds., *The Hidden Dimension: European Marxism since Lenin* (New York, 1971).

2. Of course, as Bologna and Cacciari have shown, council communism makes sense only within a society characterized by a *specific class-composition*: industrial society prior to the advent of the assembly-line and the elimination of craftsmen from the production process. (Cf. Sergio Bologna, "Class Composition and Theory of the Party," *Telos*, 13 [Fall 1972], pp. 3-27; and Massimo Cacciari, "Sul Problema dell'Organizzazione. Germania 1917-1921," in GyOrgy Lukacs, *Kommunismus 1920-1921* [Padova, 1972], pp. 7-66.) Thus, in a situation such as contemporary Spain and Portugal where the most advanced production processes in the industrial sectors co-exist with semi-feudal techniques in rural areas, the problem of a socialist alternative cannot be exhausted by council communism or any of the Trotskyist versions elaborated by the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group during its almost two decades of existence. "The tradition of all the dead generations" (which Marx mentions in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*) must be prevented from weighing "like a nightmare on the brain of the living." In creating "something that has never yet existed" it is futile to "conjure up the spirits of the past ... and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes." What must be salvaged in the process of creating a new type of social organization is the *spiri*: and the *telos* which articulated the historical failures of both council communism and *Socialisme ou Barbarie*.

3. Thus, if worse comes to worst, Spain and Portugal will probably precipitate in disastrous civil wars before accepting bureaucratic collectivism. This time the Warsaw Pact troops will be too far away to readily "legitimate" any Kadar or Husak type of regime in Spain or Portugal. A CIA-engineered Greek or Chilean solution is highly unlikely not only because of the present tenuous position of the CIA in the post- Vietnam period of re-assessment, but also because both the Greek and the Chilean solutions have proven themselves to be no solution at all. In the age of detente right-wing solutions are no longer feasible-especially in countries such as Spain and Portugal which are attempting to move away from precisely *that* type of regime. The world-wide requirements of capitalist in the 1970s can be readily met by bureaucratic collectivist regimes by providing outlets for certain products (such as computers and grain) which allow the retention of American world hegemony and, therefore, unequal exchange. As Emmanuel has shown, given this type of economic hegemony safeguarded by detente, no matter *what* is exchanged, that exchange will take the form of a rip-off. Cf. Arghiri Emmanuel, *Unequal Exchange: A Study of the Imperialism of Trade* (New York, 1972).



4. Karl Korsch, *Die materialistische Geschichtsauffassung und andere Schriften*, ed. Erich Gerlach (Frankfurt, 1971), p. 130.
5. Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy*, trans. Fred Halliday (London, 1970), p. 117. Cf. also Karl Korsch, "The Passing of Marxian Orthodoxy: Bernstein-Kautsky-Luxemburg-Lenin," in *International Council Correspondence*, vol. III, nos. 11-12 (December, 1937), pp. 7-11. Korsch's evaluation of Lenin, of course, was mediated by Stalinism. In the mid-1930s, he must have become aware of the *Philosophical Notebooks*, or what had been published of them in 1932, since in his review of Pannekoek's *Lenin als Philosoph*, he cites them. Yet, his viewpoint closely associating forms of being and forms of thought led him to interpret this return to Hegel as an intellectual fulfillment of the bourgeois character of the Russian Revolution: "Thus the whole circle not only of bourgeois materialistic thought but of all bourgeois philosophical thought from Holbach to Hegel was actually repeated by the Russian dominated phase of the Marxist movement, which passed from the adoption of 18th-century and Feuerbachian materialism by Plekhanov and Lenin in the pre-war period to Lenin's appreciation of the 'intelligent idealism' of Hegel and other bourgeois philosophers of the 19th century as against the 'unintelligent materialism' of the earlier 18th-century philosophers." Cf. Karl Korsch (under the pseudonym I.h.), "Lenin's Philosophy," in *Living Marxism*, vol. IV, no. 5 (November, 1938), p. 141. Apparently, both with the passage of time as well as his better acquaintance with Lenin's texts, Korsch's evaluation of Lenin improved considerably. Thus, in 1946, when he published four documents in his "A Non-Dogmatic Approach to Marxism," in *Politics* (May, 1946), he included passages of a very early (1894) polemic of Lenin against objectivism which vindicated the view of Marxism as grounded on a particular class viewpoint—precisely what Korsch himself had never tired of arguing, for instance, against Ruda and the Russian Marxists. See Karl Korsch, "Why I am a Marxist," in *Modern Quarterly*, vol. IX, no. 2 (April, 1935), pp. 88-95. Even during his most anti-Leninist period, however, Korsch along with all the other Hegelian Marxists, always remained an admirer of Lenin the *practical politician* as contraposed to Lenin the theoretician. This is why even in the writings dating back to the early 1930s one can occasionally find some favorable reference to Lenin: cf. Korsch, "Ueber einige grundsätzliche Voraussetzungen für eine materialistische Diskussion der Krisentheorie," originally published in *Proletarier* in February, 1933, and republished in Korsch-Mattick-Pannekoek, *Zusammenbruchstheorie des Kapitalismus oder revolutionäres Subjekt* (Berlin, 1973). Marramao's explanation of these positive references to Lenin as tactical lip-service to orthodoxy in the interest of the united front politics of the early 1930s does not seem altogether convincing. Cf. Giacomo Marramao, "Teoria della Crisi Problematica della Costituzione," in *Critica Marxista*, nos. 2-11 (1975): English translation forthcoming in *Telos* 26 (Winter 1975-76).
6. Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London, 1971), p. 84.
7. For an excellent account of convergences and divergences of Korsch and Lukacs during the 1920s, see Paul Breines, "Praxis and its Theorists: The Impact of Lukacs and Korsch in the 1920s," in *Telos*, 11 (Spring, 1972), pp. 67-104.
8. Lukacs' argument, of course, is best developed in his *Lenin: A Study of the Unity of his Thought* (London, 1970). The whole account, however, can be traced back as early as 1919 in "Tactic and Ethics," now in his *Political Writings, 1919-1929: The Question of Parliamentarianism and Other Essays* (London, 1972), pp. 11-116. Here Lukacs is simply transposing into Marxism the Hegelian logic according to which only the whole is true and, in a society in which consciousness is still prevented from becoming self-consciousness because of socio-economic class divisions, truth becomes an attribute of that part which, because of its *activity* aims at the realization of the totality and, therefore, self-consciousness and the classless society.
9. No. 119, January-February 1972. and no. 40. March-April 1972. Most of the essays were subsequently re-worked and published in Claudio Pozzoli, ed. *Ueber Karl Korsch, in Jahrbuch Arbeiterbewegung. Theorie und Geschichte* (Frankfurt, 1971). Vacca's piece (not republished in *Ueber Karl Korsch*) is a summary of his book *Lukacs o Korsch* (Bari, 1969). Cf. Paul Breines' review of Vacca's book in *Telos* 6 (Fall, 1970).
10. Cf. Karl Korsch, "The Marxist Ideology in Russia," in *Living Marxism*, vol. IV, no. 2 (March, 1938), pp. 44-50. See also "The Struggle against Fascism begins with the Struggle against Bolshevism," *Living Marxism*, vol. IV, no. 8 (September, 1939), p. 255, where it is argued that "Fascism is merely a copy of Bolshevism." Mattick, of course, still holds onto notions such as "state capitalism" and "state socialism." See Paul Mattick, *Marxism and Keynes* (Boston, 1969), ch. XX, pp. 278-291; and his "Der Leninismus und die Arbeiterbewegung des Westens," in *Lenin: Revolution und Politik* (Frankfurt, 1970), pp. 7-46. For a devastating critique of these notions, see Antonio Carlo,

"The Socio-Economic Nature of the USSR," *Telos*, 21 (Fall, 1974), pp. 2-86,

11. Interestingly enough, a very similar position was taken by Castoriadis and at least some of the members of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group immediately after World War II. Castoriadis argued that the development of the bureaucracy in Russia finally unified the class enemy and would have had to trigger a complementary unification of the working class, thus setting the stage for the final confrontation. Cf. Cornelius Castoriadis, "Phenomenologie de la Conscience Proletarienne," in *La Societe Bureaucratique*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1973), pp. 115-129. The two groups developed autonomously and it was not until the 1950s that they came into contact with each other, when Castoriadis sent some issues of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* to Pannekoek. In the ensuing correspondence (which eventually turned sour for not-altogether clear reasons) focusing on whether Russia was state-capitalist or bureaucratic-collectivist, the similarity in outlook is striking. Cf. "Reponse au Camarade Pannekoek," and "Postface A la Reponse au Camarade Pannekoek," in Cornelius Castoriadis, *L'Experience du Mouvement Ouvrier*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1974), pp. 249-277, which reprints both of Pannekoek's letters. Apparently, the council communists had reached most of the conclusions that *Socialisme ou Barbarie* came to almost 20 years earlier. Even Korsch's eventual distancing from Marxism in the 1940s anticipated by at least two decades a similar outcome in the mid-1960s with people such as Castoriadis and Lefort, and for roughly the same reasons and with the very same arguments. For Castoriadis' critique of Marxism, see "An Interview with Cornelius Castoriadis," *Telos* 23 (Spring 1975). pp. 131-155.

12. Karl Korsch, *Karl Marx* (New York, 1963), p. 235.

13. Karl Korsch, "Dix Theses sur le Marxisme aujourd'hui," in the appendix to the French translation of *Marxisme et Philosophie* (Paris, 1964), pp. 185-187. Now also in Karl Korsch, *Politische Texte* (Frankfurt and KÖln, 1974), pp. 385-387.

14. Mattick, *Marx and Keynes*, *op.cit.* p. 336. Cf. the very same passage in his *Critique of Marcuse* (New York, 1972), p. 105.

15. "What Is Communism?" in *Council Correspondence*, no. 1 (October, 1934).

16. Mattick, *Marx and Keynes*, *op.cit.*, p. 339; *Critique of Marcuse*, *op.cit.*, p. 96.

17. *Critique of Marcuse*, p. 84.

18. For an excellent overall account of Mattick's most recent work. see Russell Jacoby, "The Politics of the Crisis Theory: Towards a Critique of Automatic Marxism II," in *Telos*, 23 (Spring 1975). pp. 3-52. Ultimately, the Achilles' heel of Mattick's position is the stubborn insistence on the infamous law of the tendential rate of profits to fall as a result of the constant intensification of the organic composition of capital. This "law" has been shot down too often by Marxist critics to warrant any further attempts. In a nutshell. if it applied at all to capitalism, it certainly does not apply to the post-competitive (monopoly) phase of capitalism. For typical (although dubious) critiques of the law, see Paul M. Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York, 1968). pp. 100-108; and Geoff Hodgson, "The Theory of the Falling Rate of Profit." in *New Left Review*. 84 (March-April, 1974). pp. 52-82. In following Grossman's analysis of the Marxist theory of the crisis, Mattick overlooks, as Marramao has pointed out. that "Grossman's effort stands *before* the profound structural transformations to be undertaken by capital after the 1929 crisis. i.e. .. *before* the monopolistic and state capitalistic form was revealed ever more clearly in the course of the 1940s. And this divides us from his work and from the last crisis of overproduction generated by the anarchy of the competitive mechanism and the uncontrollable convulsions of the old 'automatic character of the market: . Cf. Giacomo Marramao, "Political Economy and Critical Theory," *Telos*, 24 (Summer, 1975), p. 65.

19. Korsch, *Karl Marx*, *op.cit.*, p. 234.

20. Korsch, "Ueber einige grundsätzliche Voraussetzungen .... *op.cit.*

21. Gian Enrico Rusconi, "La Problematika dei Consigli in Karl Korsch," in *Annali Feltrinelli*, vol. 15 (Milan, 1974), p. 1205. A portion of this *excellent* article is translated in this issue of *New German Critique*.

22. Karl Korsch, "Praktischer Sozialismus," in *Die Tat*, vol. 11, no. 10 (1920).

23. Throughout his life Korsch attacked such a view. Cf. Karl Korsch, "Why I am a Marxist," *op.cit.*

24. For an excellent analysis of these problems, see Lucio Colletti, "The Theory of the Crash," *Telos*, 13 (Fall, 1972), pp. 34-46.

25. It is interesting that, almost half a century later, the same argument reappears in a well-known essay by Wolfgang Müller and Christel Neuss, "Die Sozialstaatsillusion und der Widerspruch von Lohnarbeit und Kapital," in *Probleme des Klassenkampfes*, Sonderheft 1 (June, 1971), pp. 71-98 (an English translation will appear in *Telos*, 25 [Fall, 1975]); to point out the limitations of state

intervention, and therefore, vindicate the old theory of the crash. For a critical evaluation, see Jiirgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Tom McCarthy (Boston, 1975), pp. 50-60.

26. Cf. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London, 1971), p. 242.

27. See Karl Korsch, "Die Politik im neueren Deutschland," in *Der Geist der neuen Volksgemeinschaft* (Berlin, 1919), pp. 63-71. Korsch writes: "Socialization of the economy and socialization of education are only two faces of the same process of transition from a private to a communal socialist economy. This transition is not important only and primarily for questions of production and consumption of material goods, but it is a cultural and spiritual question of immense import,"

28. Cr. Rusconi, "La Problematica dei Consigli in Karl Korsch," *op.cit.*, p. 1202; and Michael Buckmiller, "Observaciones sobre la Critica de Korsch de Oskar Negt," in the anthology being reviewed, p. 117. As Rusconi indicates, one need only read through the previously unpublished "FUnfzehn Thesen iiber wissenschaftlichen Sozialismus" (now in *Politische Texte, op.cit.*, pp. 51-56) written just a few months prior to *Marxism and Philosophy*, to note that they contain *no* reference to Hegel.

29. Leonardo Ceppa, "La Concezione del Marxismo in Karl Korsch," *Annali Peltrinelli*, vol.

30. XV (Milan, 1974), p. 1250. *tu*«, p. 1247.

31. Karl Korsch, "Ueber materialistische Dialektik," originally published in *Die Internationale*, vol. VII, nos. 10-11 (June 2, 1924), pp. 376-379, and subsequently reprinted in all German editions of *Marxismus und Philosophie*. For reasons neither clear nor justifiable this important essay has been omitted from the English translation of *Marxism and Philosophy*.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Interestingly enough, when Adorno wanted to exemplify identity theory in Marxist theory, he specifically mentioned Korsch and ... Diamat! Cc. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main, 1966), p. 144.

34. Cf. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, op.cit.*, p. 465.

35. Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, "Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis," in *Stichworte: Kritische Modelle 2* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), pp. 169-191.

36. In many respects, this is precisely what Lukacs also attempted to do. For reasons which I have elaborated elsewhere, however, Lukacs ended up recuperating the whole Leninist problematic within the Hegelian Marxist model, whereas Gramsci was able to avoid such an outcome. Cc. my "Dialectic and Materialism in Lukacs," *Telos*, 11 (Spring, 1972), pp. 105-133.

37. Karl Korsch, "Grundlitzliches Uber Sozialisierung," in *Schriften zur Sozialisierung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 73.

38. Korsch, "Ueber materialistische Dialektik," *op.cit.*, p. 379.

39. Korsch, *Karl Marx*, *op.cit.*, pp. 230-231.

40. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks, op.cit.*, p. 468.

Cf. "Preface to the New Edition (1967)," in *History and Class Consciousness, op.cit.*

42. Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy, op.cit.*, pp. 56-58.

43. Leonardo Ceppa, "La Concezione del Marxismo in Karl Korsch," *op.cit.*, p. 1250.

44. Korsch, *Karl Marx, op.cit.*, p. 231.

45. Among Korsch's many unfinished manuscripts there is one which, according to the editor of the 1967 German edition of *Karl Marx*, he wanted to expand into a full volume dealing with the doctrine of ideology and of the State. Apparently, nothing came of it and the few remarks that remain indicate a mere historicist critique of the metaphysical conception of immutable truths. In the last two paragraphs, Korsch restates his thesis concerning the identity of forms of being and forms of thought which throughout his life prevented him from dealing with ideologies other than as immediate extensions of social being: "... forms of consciousness cannot change before a change in the bourgeois mode of production," in Karl Korsch, *Karl Marx*, ed. Glltz Langkau (Frankfurt and Vienna, 1967), appendix V.

46. See, for example, Ceppa, *op.cit.*, p. 1259; and Fred Halliday, "Karl Korsch: An Introduction," in Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy, op.cit.*, p. 22.

47. Hans-jurgen Krahl, *Konstitution und Klassenkampf* (Frankfurt, 1971).

48. Rusconi comes to very similar conclusions concerning Korsch's earlier works: "the active theoretical thrust ... breaks down on the one hand in the empirical scientificization of the dialectical method, while on the other, in its militant function." Cr. Gian Enrico Rusconi, "Dialektik in pragmatischer Anwendung," in Claudio Pozzoli, ed., *Ueber Karl Korsch, op.cit.*, p. 156.

49. Cr. "Capitalism and Planning," in *Council Correspondence*, no. 4 January, 1935), pp. 5-15.
50. Karl Korsch, "The Fascist Counter Revolution," in *Living Marxism*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Fall, 1940). pp. 29-41: and "The Workers' Fight against Fascism," vol. 5, no. 3 (Winter, 1941), pp. 36-49.
51. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York, 1972), chapter on "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," pp. 120-167.
52. Cf. *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Paris, 1936).
53. Cf. Ceppa, *op.cit.*, p. 1254.
- Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State (1940)," in *Telos*, 15 (Spring, 1973), pp. 3-20.
55. For an excellent account of the relation between Pollock's work, classical Marxism and critical theory, see Marramao, "Political Economy and Critical Theory," *op.cit.*
56. For a good expository account of the new configuration of social crises, see Jürgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, *op.cit.*
- 57: For Korsch's own evaluation of the differences between American and European science, see his letter to Paul Partos of July 30, 1939, in *Alternative*, no. 41 (April, 1965), pp. 76-77. 58. Herbert Marcuse, *Negations*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston, 1968), p. 154.
59. For a good step in that direction, see *Die Linke gegen die Parteiherrschaft*, ed. Fritz Kool (Olten, 1970).
60. This piece has been recently translated into English and published with an Introduction by David Bathrick, in *New German Critique*, 5 (Fall, 1974), pp. S-II.