

## **The *German Ideology***

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### **What do Marx and Engels set out to do?**

The *German Ideology* divides into three parts. The first part is essentially a critique of German philosophical idealism through which Marx and Engels refine and develop their conceptual framework “or way of understanding the world”, the seeds of which had been sewn in earlier works. In the preface to the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels state:

‘The first volume of the present publication has the aim of unclenching these sheep [Young-Hegelians].... It is its aim to debunk and discredit the philosophic struggle with the shadows of reality which appeals to the dreamy and muddled German nation.’

Marx and Engels’ aims are therefore to show that German philosophical idealism bears no resemblance to the ‘real’ conditions of people’s existence and so argue that the solutions advocated on the basis of such philosophy are useless. Through their critique of idealism they clarify their own conceptual framework of historical materialism which in turn reveals their epistemological basis and their methodology. The result is an analysis of the world that offers the possibility of people changing their conditions of existence through practice. Any interpretation or understanding of the world which does not offer the possibility of humans actively altering their material conditions is seen, by Marx and Engels, as sterile and achieves no purpose.

In the *German Ideology*, Marx and Engels also critique and distance themselves from mechanical determinism, positivism and empiricism which, they argue, results in an incomplete analysis of the social world and can be seen to form the epistemological foundations of the varieties of socialism and communism of some of their contemporaries.

Parts two and three of the *German Ideology* are devoted to attacking the socialist and communist doctrines of their time, using the conceptual framework outlined in part one.

### **What do Marx and Engels say?**

German idealism, as exemplified in the works of the Young Hegelians, argued that the material world, i.e., the conditions within which people live out their lives, are a product of people’s ideas, thoughts and conceptions. Consciousness, which is the product of these thoughts and ideas, exists independently of the empirical world and so can be seen to be trans-spatial and trans-historical. Society is organised and exists as it does because people have structured it so through their consciousness. It is therefore consciousness, they argued, that limits and restricts people’s actions and the material conditions in

which they live out their lives. If material conditions are to be altered, what is required is that people change their thoughts, ideas etc., and so change their material world.<sup>1</sup>

Marx and Engels reject this view. They argue that in the first instance consciousness is formed by the material circumstances of the individual. Just as the empirical world since human existence has not remained constant, neither has consciousness. Consciousness then is not absolute and does not exist independently of the empirical world. On the contrary, consciousness corresponds to the particular material conditions of a given historical epoch and so is both historically and spatially specific. People's ideas and thoughts are dependent on the material circumstances in which they find themselves. These material circumstances, which structure consciousness include labour, size of the population and the mode of production employed to produce the new needs of the individuals who make up that society.

The means by which the material world structures consciousness is identified by Marx and Engels as labour. They argue that people begin

‘...to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather, it is a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their lives so they are. What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.’ (*German Ideology*, p. 42)

As each generation comes into being they find particular forms of social relations in which the division of labour, which is essentially different forms of ownership, has reached a particular stage. \*\*\*

‘The existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument and product of labour.’ (*German Ideology* p. 43)

Marx and Engels then go on to discuss the various forms of ‘ownership’ which have existed and their corresponding divisions of labour i.e., tribal ownership, ancient communal and State ownership and feudal or estate property. They examine the organisation of society during those epochs and the development of divisions such as town and country, industry and commerce, and the forces that led to those divisions i.e., population size, growth and geographical distribution, technology and the ways in which these give rise to particular forms of social and political relations. They state:

‘The fact is, therefore that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations... The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are, i.e., as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independently of their will.’ (*German Ideology* pp. 46–7)

In direct contradiction to German idealism, Marx and Engels are, therefore, arguing that consciousness is at first directly connected with the material activity and intercourse of individuals, as is all other '...mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics etc., of a people.' (*German Ideology* p. 47)

It follows therefore that:

'consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process...[therefore] Life is not determined by consciousness but consciousness by life' (*German Ideology* p. 47)

Marx and Engels' thesis is therefore that the structure of society is a result of individuals reproducing themselves, both physically and mentally through their labour. The way in which this is achieved is limited by the mode of production in existence at that time and which has been inherited from the previous generation. Although the mode of production can be, and is, modified in order to fulfil needs that arise with (primarily) the growth in population, the extent to which they can be modified depends on the degree to which the division of labour exists and the technological stage which has been reached, together with the physical organisation of society. The structure of society in its turn also affects consciousness, both of the individual and the collective consciousness of a nation.

It can be seen that Marx and Engels are not advocating a straight determinism, in that people are not just a product of their material circumstances, but are arguing that there is a dialectical relationship between the material world and consciousness. So people are born into particular material circumstances and, initially, those circumstances structure that person's consciousness. However, as that individual becomes an active productive being he/she enters into definite social relations which are inherited but which he/she also creates and modifies.

The organisational form of a society is not therefore inevitable or natural, it does not exist in the form it does because people have conceived of it in that particular way, but is a result of generations of people reproducing themselves both physically and mentally, using the existing structure of society and modifying it to fulfil new needs.

So, claim Marx and Engels,

'circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances.'

However, Marx and Engels recognise that so far, their argument is an abstract one and therefore of limited use. They therefore attempt to illustrate their argument using historical examples. In order to do this it is necessary, they claim, to posit certain fundamental conditions and premises, without which the human race could not have and would not continue to exist. They state:

'...the first premise of all human existence and therefore of all history... [is] that men must be in a position to live in order to 'make history'. But life involves before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the means to satisfy those needs, the production of material life itself.... The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired)

leads to new needs.... The third circumstances...is that men, who daily remake their own life begin to make other men, to propagate their kind; the relation between man and woman parents and children, the family.’ (*German Ideology* p. 49)<sup>2</sup>

These three aspects, which are fundamental to humans, are not stages but exist simultaneously and appear as a ‘...double relationship; on the one hand as natural on the other as a social relationship’. (*German Ideology* p. 50)<sup>3</sup>

So that the family, which appears to be a natural structure, is also recognised as a social structure. Marx and Engels argue, ‘The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one....’ (*German Ideology* p. 49)

Social relations come into being as a result of, and correspond to, particular modes of production that are employed in the process of humans producing their means of subsistence and which are also altered according to new needs that arise. Therefore, argue Marx and Engels,

‘It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is a ‘productive force’. Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence that the ‘history of humanity’ must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange.’ (*German Ideology*, p. 50)

These fundamental conditions of history, and the ‘re-writing’ of history according to industry and exchange are crucial in understanding how Marx and Engels make the link between consciousness and the material world through labour, and also shows how the material circumstances of an individual structure consciousness. So that it becomes obvious that there is a materialist connection between individuals, which is determined by their needs and the mode of production in existence. The connection, i.e., labour, is, however, constantly taking on new forms as the division of labour becomes more developed, as the growth in population creates new needs and as the technology available to satisfy those needs is created.

Marx and Engels argue that only after accepting and understanding the implications of such fundamental conditions of life do we find that people also possess ‘consciousness’. This consciousness is nevertheless, not inherent, not ‘pure’ consciousness because consciousness only comes into being when individuals enter into social relations with each other. Hence, ‘Consciousness is therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.’ (*German Ideology* p. 51)

However, consciousness is not stagnant, but alters over the course of time so that,

‘Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the immediate sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men’s relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal

consciousness of nature (natural religion) just because nature is as yet hardly modified historically.’  
(*German Ideology* p. 51)

The way in which German philosophical idealism analyses consciousness, in suggesting that it exists independently of the material world, is therefore shown to be spurious. In its place Marx and Engels posit a materialist analysis, arguing that there is no trans-historical, trans-spatial consciousness, spirit or essence to man but that consciousness is historically and spatially specific and dependent on the mode of production and the division of labour in existence in any historical epoch. Consciousness is not therefore given, stagnant or inherent but alters according to the material and social circumstances which men create in the process of producing their means of subsistence. So, argue Marx and Engels,

‘Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development, but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking.’

### **The Division of Labour.**

The most important idea to come out of the *German Ideology* is that people reproduce themselves both physically and mentally through their labour. Obviously, therefore, the means by which this is carried out is crucial both in terms of fulfilling needs and the effects this has on people’s consciousness or the corresponding forms of ideology. Marx and Engels examine the concept of the division of labour tracing its origin and showing how an increase in productivity, and increase of needs (which are a result of the increase in population) lead to further developments in the division of labour. They argue that initially the division of labour begins with the sexual act and then develops because of biological factors such as physical strength. However, they state,

‘[The] Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent.) (*German Ideology* p. 51)

Once that labour has been divided into mental and material labour so that the division of labour truly exists, two things result. First, consciousness can be presented as existing independently of the material world, as a separate sphere. So that there purports to be ‘pure’ theory, i.e., theology, philosophy, ethics etc. Second, the division of labour contains inherent contradictions because essentially, the division of labour implies a dichotomy of intellectual and material action, or as Marx and Engels explain it, as ‘...enjoyment and labour, production and consumption...’ These aspects of the division of labour are allocated to different individuals and from this arises a contradiction: some people produce whilst others consume, a contradiction that can only be resolved by abolishing the division of labour itself.

Marx and Engels go on to argue that the division of labour also implies a contradiction between the interests of individuals and the interests of the community of those individuals. They maintain that the communal interest exists in the form of the mutual interdependence of individuals who are allocated particular forms of labour but that individuals do not recognise this because their labour is not voluntarily given but is imposed on them. This imposition of particular aspects of the division of labour is seen by individuals as an alien power which is opposed to them and from which they cannot escape.

In short, the division of labour is socially constructed not natural.

The socially constructed division of labour, therefore, begins to take on an independent status, which appears to exist independently of human action and which results in divisions and contradictions which are manifested as different interests, i.e., individual and communal interests.

Marx therefore inverts the method of analysis used by the German philosophers, re individual and community. Marx notes that:

'...out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the State, divorced from the real interests of the individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the 'real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration....and especially....on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one dominates all the others.' (*German Ideology* pp. 53–4)

### **The Relationship Between Consciousness And The Material World**

The fundamental idea to emerge from the *German Ideology* is that 'man' reproduces himself through his labour, thus, as noted above, 'Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.'

To substantiate this claim Marx adopts a historical materialist analysis to show the relationship between the empirical world and consciousness. He thus inverts the predominant German philosophical view of his time and rejects abstract concepts as the starting point of analysis and instead begins with empirically observable phenomena in order to arrive at the link between ideas and material circumstances within which people live their lives.

"In direct contrast two German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from birth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, not from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, call received, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of the life-process."

However, in starting off with the empirically observable, Marx does not merely accept uncritically what he sees (unlike empiricists), but attempts to get beneath the surface of appearance to reveal their essential nature and the connection between it and the social ideological structures, so linking theory with practice.

Thus,

"Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification or speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production."  
(p.46)

The link between "social and political structures" [ideological] and "production" [empirical world] which Marx identifies is LABOUR (as discussed above). He does not however arrive at labour in an abstract fashion or by accepting traditional accounts of history, but 're-writes' history, using a materialist method, examining the empirically observable facts, such as: the division of labour, the physical organisation of the population, the mode of production in particular epochs, and population size and growth. In re-writing history, Marx postulates certain fundamental conditions which enable the existence of life and without which people could not exist.

the re-writing of history according to the mode of production differentiate Marx's analysis from empiricism, materialism and mechanical determinism.

"Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialist connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a 'history' independently of the existence of any political or religious nonsense which in addition may hold men together."

Marx is arguing that there is no trans-historical, trans-spatial consciousness, spirit or essence to man but that consciousness is historically specific, dependent on the mode of production and the division of labour of a given epoch or location. Consciousness is therefore not given, stagnant or inherent but alters according to the material and social circumstances which men create in the process of producing their means of subsistence.

"Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development, but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking.

But, given the fundamental conditions of history (above), in the first instance it is the mode by which these conditions are fulfilled which determine the circumstances in which men live out their daily lives.

However, man is also aware of the need to associate with other individuals and this awareness is the beginning of an awareness that he is living in a society. This initial awareness, is only an instinct which differentiates him from animals only in so far as he is conscious of the instinct. Such a consciousness develops only,

"through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then that division of labour which develops spontaneously or 'naturally' by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents etc., etc. Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, **priests**, is concurrent).

Marx then looks at how it is possible for consciousness to appear to be independent of people's material circumstances and argues that once labour is divided into material and mental labour it becomes possible

for consciousness to take on an independent existence and claim to represent something without representing something real, i.e., empirical reality. From this point on

"consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. But even in this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because the existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production.... Moreover, it is quite immaterial what consciousness starts to do on its own: out of all such muck we get only the one inference that these three moments, the forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the **division of labour** implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity - enjoyment and labour, production and consumption - devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour.

Marx goes on to show how the division of labour, which is synonymous with private property because, "in one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity, in the other with reference to the product of the activity." The division of labour therefore results in a contradiction between the interests of the individual and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. He argues that:

"As long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him."

Man therefore becomes alienated from his own labour, the product of his labour and from individuals so that what man produces in order to fulfill his needs, his relationship with other individuals in the process of producing his means of subsistence, takes on an independent status in that it appears natural and so inevitable. Man's real conditions of existence are therefor obscured from himself and enables political economists to postulate that this relationship, of man to nature, rules the world through the relation of supply and demand, "a relation which hovers over the earth like the fate of the ancients, and with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear". By showing that such a relationship is humanly or socially created, Marx is able to argue that this relationship is not inevitable but can be overthrown through 'practice' in the form of a revolution and that in a communist society, having realised their real conditions of existence man will be free to choose his labour and alienation can be abolished. However,

"This "alienation" (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two **practical** premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e., a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless", and produced, at the same time, the contraction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their **world-historical**, instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it **want** is merely made

general, and with **destitution** the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced..."

To sum up then, Marx argues that consciousness does not have an independent trans-historical existence, but that it is historically specific. Consciousness is therefore not innate, but is conditioned by the material circumstances, created by man in the process of fulfilling his daily needs. Given that man creates his material conditions, he is also able, given the right conditions, to change those conditions through revolutionary practice.

### **The Illusion of the Epoch**

In the German Ideology Marx and Engels go on to examine the ideological structures which exist in society thereby concentrating on "civil society" but bearing in mind what has been said above. They look at civil society and the way in which history has been written and understood by idealist writers. They define civil society as:

"Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, insofar, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organise itself as State.. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organisation evolving directly out of production and commerce, which in all ages forms the basis of the State and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name."

They explain history as:

"...nothing but the succession of the separate generations, each of which exploits the materials, the capital funds, the productive forces handed down to it by all preceding generations, and thus, on the one hand, continues the traditional activity in completely changed circumstances and, on the other modifies the old circumstances with a completely changed activity. This can be speculatively distorted so that later history is made the goal of earlier history e.g., the goal ascribed to the discovery of America is to further the eruption of the French Revolution. Thereby history receives its own special aims and becomes a 'person ranking with other persons'."

What Marx and Engels are objecting to is that history is being disguised by allocating it an independent existence to man's empirical conditions of existence and so enabling it to 'follow its own inevitable course'. Hence we tend to believe in 'progress', 'destiny' or 'goals'. To put this right, to be able to 're-write' history as it **really** is, that is as a result of the material, empirically verifiable, practice of individuals:

"depends on our ability to expound the real process of production, starting out from the material production of life itself, and to comprehend the form of intercourse connected with this and created by this mode of production (ie civil society in its various stages), as the basis of all history, and to show it in its action as State, to explain all the different theoretical products and forms of consciousness, religion, philosophy, ethics etc. etc. and trace their origins and growth from that

basis, by which means, of course, the whole thing can be depicted in its totality (and therefore the reciprocal action of these various sides on one another)".

In re-conceptualising history in this way, it

"shows that history does not end by being resolved into 'self-consciousness' as 'spirit of the spirit', but that in it at each stage there is found a material result: a sum of productive forces, an historically created relation of individuals to nature and to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its predecessor; a mass of productive forces, capital funds and conditions, which, on the one hand, is indeed modified by the new generation, but also on the other prescribes for it its conditions of life and gives it a definite development, a special character."

Having developed a version of history which corresponds and reflects the real empirical conditions of life, Marx and Engels go on to criticise Feuerbach, a materialist who declares himself a communist, for being unable to reconceptualise history in this way and thereby slipping back into idealism.

"As an example of Feuerbach's acceptance and at the same time misunderstanding of existing reality, which he still shares with our opponents, we recall the passage in the *Philosophie der Zukunft* where he develops the view that the existence of a thing or a man is at the same time its or his essence, that the conditions of existence, the mode of life and activity of an animal or human individual are those in which its "essence" feels itself satisfied. Here every exception is expressly conceived as an unhappy chance, as an abnormality which cannot be altered. Thus if millions of proletarians feel by no means contented with their living conditions, if their 'existence' does not in the least correspond to their 'essence', then, according to the passage quoted, this is an unavoidable misfortune which must be born quietly"

Marx and Engels argue that the contradiction between 'existence' and 'essence' need not be 'born quietly' nor can it be resolved through mental constructs, but only through revolution.

"In reality and for the **practical** materialist, i.e. the **communist**, it is a question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically attacking and changing existing things. When occasionally we find such views with Feuerbach, they are never more than isolated surmises and have much too little influence on his general outlook to be considered as anything else than embryos capable of development. Feuerbach's 'conception' of the sensuous world is confined on the one hand to mere contemplation of it, and on the other to mere feeling; he says 'Man' instead of 'real historical man'. 'Man' is really 'the German'. In the first case, the contemplation of the sensuous world, he necessarily lights on things which contradict his consciousness and feeling, which disturb the harmony he presupposes, the harmony of all parts of the sensuous world and especially of man and nature. To remove the disturbance, he must take refuge in a double perception, a profane one which only perceives the 'flatly obvious' and a higher, philosophical, one which perceives the 'true essence' of things. He does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society; and, indeed, in the sense that it is an historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social system according to the changed needs. Even the objects of the simplest 'sensuous certainty' are only given him through socialism development,

industry and commercial intercourse. The cherry tree, like almost all fruit trees, was, as is well known, only a few centuries ago transplanted by **commerce** into our zone, and therefore only **by** this action of a definite society in a definite age it has become 'sensuous certainty' for Feuerbach."

Thus Marx and Engels are admonishing Feuerbach for splitting nature and history and not understanding that each are the result of the other in any historical epoch, once this is understood, then all philosophical problems are resolved.

"For instance, the important question of the relation of man to nature (Bruno [Bauer] goes so far as to speak of 'antithese' in nature and history (p. 110), as though these were two separate 'things' and man did not always have before him an historical nature and a natural history) out of which all the 'unfathomably lofty works' on 'substance' and 'self-consciousness' were born, crumbles of itself when we understand that the celebrated 'unity of man with nature' has always existed in industry and has existed in varying forms in every epoch according to the lesser or greater development of industry; just like the 'struggle' of man with nature, right up to the development of his productive powers on a corresponding basis. Industry and commerce, production and the exchange of the necessities of life, themselves determine distribution, the structure of the different social classes and are, in turn, determined by it as to the mode in which they are carried on...."

## Conclusion

Whilst the German Ideology was a critique of German philosophical idealism, counter to which Marx and Engels developed an historical materialist epistemology, it was also as Marx states in the "Preface to the Critique of Political Economy" a means of sorting themselves out, "we had achieved our main purpose - self clarification." This may be a key to the debate on the structuralist/humanist dilemma of Marx's later works. Although there might appear to be an epistemological break in the German Ideology, it can also be read (depending on the sections which are selected to prove the point) as a way of laying the foundations for later work in that the ground work, i.e., the epistemological underpinnings of later works are taken for granted by Marx. He and Engels had already worked through the idealist/materialist problematic. But, the way in which they worked through them was to bring in history as the key element of the 'new' materialist understanding of the world. Having accepted the 'fundamental conditions of existence' and accorded them due relevance, the next step was to look at particular aspects of the real world and using an historical materialist analysis reach a more complete understanding of what enables the world to exist as it does.

Marx and Engels are not therefore putting forward an anti-humanist understanding, but have accepted *apriori* that the world is a product of human action, that the structures which they examine as pre-given, in that they exist in the real world not purely in the imagination of individuals or society.

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<sup>1</sup> The quote from the *German Ideology* is: "...consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men....Since according to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their

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present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness and thus of removing their limitations."

<sup>2</sup> Full[er] quote

"Since we are dealing with Germans, who are devoid of premises, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and therefore, of all history, the premise, namely that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'. But life involves before anything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life...."

The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first [n was Marx innumerate?] historical act....

The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the family. The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create a new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one (except in Germany), and must then be treated and analysed according to the existing empirical data, not according to 'the concept of the family', as is the custom in Germany."

<sup>3</sup> Full quotes: "... a double relationship: on the one hand as natural, on the other as a social relationship. By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is a 'productive force'. Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the 'history of humanity' must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange."