

23.x.'69 Spencer, Darwin, Malthus, Marx, Freud - I

So many of the modern synthetic thinkers are Marxist/Freudian revisionists that it is necessary for us to understand where they are starting from. E.g., Norman O. Brown & Paul Goodman, making structures from a psychological point of view, start from Freud &, in the case of Goodman, largely reject him.

One must also understand how the "Christianization" of Darwin justifies the capitalist structure.

What a majority of people at any given time call "human nature", isn't.

B Malthus, Essay on Population, 1798. This is where one starts. Remember Wittgenstein: "Darwin's theory of evolution has no more to do with natural science than any other hypothesis." "How can the all-embracing logic which mirrors the world use such special catches & manipulations, only because these are all connected into an infinitely fine network." 6.34 "All propositions . . . are a priori intuitions . . ."

Malthus is a religious economist who says that there is a natural law such that "when population outruns food supply", nature checks population by "war, pestilence, famine, & disease". (From there to Freud in 1931 there is a direct line.) Life is therefore a struggle for survival, & governments can do nothing about this "inexorable" system. Under "natural liberty, population & food supply find their own level." All man can do is "become virtuous, & resist temptation". (Malthus was a clergyman.)

This is another theory of tragedy. You set up a dramatic structure involving struggle, and call it "nature".

This is where Darwin starts: with the "struggle for existence". (Malthus apparently got some of his ideas from the naturalist, ~~Buffon~~ Buffon.) Darwin reapplied conclusions about society to natural history, & then reapplied them to society as "natural". They are theological principles as well: the universe itself is in a constant state of conflict between good & evil.

In America, Calvinism becomes Social Darwinism: some are elected to survive by nature. One is tempted to stop there: once you understand how Calvinism became the ethics of capitalism, you've understood the lot! (Engels wrote in 1844: "The Malthusian theory is merely the economic expression of the religious dogma of the contradiction between spirit & nature, and the corruption of both resulting from it.")

Marx too found his ideas in an existing tradition of conflict philosophy; and Freud, at medical college, took a course in Darwinism, which he never forgot. He always looked for "laws of nature", through which you could predict "human nature". In The Future of an Illusion & Civilization & its Discontents, there is nothing to be done about it. (Marcuse inherits this as well; he is a Hegelian Darwinist.) Freud made his model of the human event in the shape of a conflict drama.

B Look at the terminology in Darwin's first book, The Journal of Researches . . ., 1839. It relies heavily on patterns of conflict & anthropomorphism. Ants are "lion-hearted little fellows" ("leomorphism" - JLW). He speaks of the Tierra del Fuego

savages as "children". The journey in the Pacific lasted from 1831-1836, & Darwin read Malthus in 1838; his book (Journal . . .) came out in 1839. He required "a grand scheme" in which organized beings had been created.

In The Structure & Distribution of Coral Reefs, 1842, he writes of "the almost universal law of 'consume & be consumed'". "The vital energies of the coral conquer the mechanical power of the waves".

The Origin of Species, 1859: By Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life.

It's a Malthusian tragedy of inevitability, Victorian gloom, & sexual evasiveness. Creatures "strive" to increase their numbers; "a large & metaphorical sense including dependence of one being on another, including not only the life of the individual, but success in leaving progeny." "The Struggle for Existence," "but only for convenience." (Note that Americans absorbed ideas from Europe based on scarcity, although they lived in an abundance economy.) "The war of nature" to produce "the higher animals".

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Darwin worried about the sexual implications of his researches, such as in his investigation of blushing, in the report of which he could not include the information from doctors that women blushed below the neck. He was also bothered by plants which climbed up other plants or which "fertilized themselves", or homosexual wild peas.

He was worried by the apparent conflict between appearance & reality. A field is beautiful, but "underneath is rapacity". Darwin, Marx, & Freud are all involved in a romantic hunt for invisible motivations.

In the Origin & in his letters, Darwin constantly talks of himself as possibly being crucified, having his throat cut, exterminated, & annihilated. The book is anthropocentric; he speaks of creatures being "happy" or "unhappy". One of his basic metaphors is the Tree of Life, with dead branches & new shoots. A basic metaphor is the "tangled bank", in which everything is so inextricably intertwined that it cannot be unraveled (Marx uses this as well). You must untangle it all & produce laws. He is also interested in morphology (cf. later Henry Adams & Charles Olson), which he defines as "the law of formal structure independent of function", which, of course, is impossible.

He is also insistent that you have steady continuity in the history of forms. Discontinuity & catastrophe are the two major factors in modern thinking about the history of the universe, but they do not appeal to Darwin.

This is something to watch with the figures in this course: their attitudes toward discontinuity. The formation of laws must include the instances which break those laws. There is not a steady development; e.g., the north & south poles of the earth have changed places several times. But Darwin insists that "all true classification is geneological. Of course, the theory of genetics (Mendel) had not been discovered, so Darwin does not

include it. Mendel & Darwin were both experimenting with sweet peas, but only Mendel arrived at genetics. The reason lies partly in their respective attitudes towards their subject.

"All animals & plants are descended from some one proto-type."

Having written the Origin, he spent the rest of his life gathering evidence for it. The drama begins with a primaevial creative act which is then continuously reenacted as the dramatic myth of creation. He searches, for fathering, seeding, sexing, law-giving origins. "One general law leading to the advancement of all organic being." It is "multiple, various, & let's the strongest live and the weakest die." This implies that there are original seeds which have strength in them, or weakness: an original selection, or predestination, as in Calvinism. "Have we any right to assume that the Creator works by intellectual powers like those of man?" But it is continuous: "The Father does not intervene." (This is what McLuhan calls "single point of view".)

"Nature" in Darwin may be male or female, malign or beneficent. In 1844 in worries about "his will" & "his waste" (which also worried Tennyson) (Henry Adams worried also about what to do with evolution in relation to status, continuity, process of selection: what is the status of men in the universe? Norman Mailer also deals with this.)

Darwin insists on the welding of morphology & teliology. Note that it also has built into it already the Oedipal principle: the killing off of one generation by the next in order to survive. (In Freud the opposing forces come out as Eros & Thanatos.) In Freud the "killing off" becomes the myth of the "primal hoard", which Freud believed to be literally true. Marx also posits a necessary destruction & rebirth in a series of endless conflicts, which is Dialectical Materialism (he brings in the end of the world as well, the "withering away of the state"). (Frazier's informants for The Golden Bough were conflict-oriented missionaries, doctors, etc., who inevitably gave the myths they communicated to him Darwinist overtones; so this work is also Darwinist in tone.)

"The principle of competition between organism & organism, between child & parent, results in new & improved forms of life." A myth of royal succession! "Nature can never take a great or sudden leap." Liberal gradualism. (Marx was surprised by the Paris Commune because the proletariat had made it without him; but he did at least welcome it.)

B The Descent of Man, 1871. Darwin wants to reduce "that arrogance which made our forefathers declare that they were descended from demi-gods," & to show that "man is descended from some lowly organized form." ("aquatic") It is probably from this book that Freud particularly derives his "primal hoard".

Right-wingers at the time read Darwin's concept as a socialist free-for-all; he was banned by both right & left. Spectator reviewer realized that Darwin was re-writing "the fall" in terms of biological teliology: "the higher animals are nobler in instinct than the savage races of men", caused by "their disobedient seizure of knowledge beyond the animal state" (cf. Freud's libido & id).

(You might examine the ways in which the Descent gets fused into the idea of America as Second Eden. Dreiser's Cooperwood novels, e.g., begin with small boy watching octopus in tank devour fish; later he becomes millionaire. Series ends with him turning to theosophy; cf. Yeats.)

B For Scopes trial, see Ray Ginger, Six Days or Forever, 1956.

Darwin doesn't really reduce men to their bestial ancestry, but rather ennobles animals. His animus is principally against savages rather than animals or "noble men".

You also find in Darwin the idea that culture is compensatory and sublimatory (cf. Freud). The taboo areas are bisexuality & female sexual desire. He believes that the fall of Greece was possibly due to extreme sexuality. Racism is also endemic: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate & replace the savage races throughout the world."

The whole of the Descent is conservative, class-bound, & colonialist. It is a sacrificial drama, without any reference to cooperation or mutual aid. The superior tribal members sacrifice the weaker ones to the "common good". "Fit" & "weak" are terms of value. He considers "power" & "sacrifice" to be the major actions of human history.

Unamuno, in The Tragic Sense of Life, shows Darwin's influence in referring to man as a "sick animal".

Marx: divided as to how much energy he thinks goes into heroic individualism as against systematic organization. He was struck by the idea of the Paris Commune because most of the people were anonymous.

By character he is an anarchist; i.e., is not drawn to any kind of organization. He liked children rather than adults.

In the beginning, his basic myth is Prometheus (cf. Shelley, Byron). In Preface to his doctoral dissertation, 1841, he identifies himself with Prometheus: for god-structures, men are commodities. Anything which uses men's energies as a commodity is, for Marx, destructive of value, & alienates them from their true development. In 1844 papers, he describes this condition as "preventing men from developing freely their physical and mental energy," and "mortifying their bodies & ruining their minds". "Alienated labour produces alienated life." Owning human energy as private property is what both gods & capitalists do. (cf. William Burroughs, who understands this profoundly) Private property includes human energy, land, technological means of production. See especially "A Strange Labour" (or "Alienated Labour" in Anchor ed., p. 287) & "Private Property & Communism", p. 301. The 1844 papers are perhaps the first instance in which a 19th man understands the relation between private property & the condition of women, as related to marriage & prostitution. He is interested in the way everything can be turned into property, so that marriage becomes "an exclusive private property", & ~~women~~ "a piece of communal & common property". The image of prostitution is central in Marx: selling your energy as a commodity. "Just as the woman passes from marriage to general prostitution,

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so the entire world of wealth, i.e., of man's objective substance, passes from the relationship of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property, to a state of universal prostitution within the community." "In the approach to woman as the spoil & handmaid of communal lust, is expressed the infinite degradation in which man exists for himself. For the secret of this approach has its unambiguous, decisive, undisguised expression in the relation of man to woman, and in the manner in which the direct & natural procreative relationship is conceived." This is very different from Darwin; you must watch the point at which he has read Darwin & is influenced by him. (Perhaps, says M., it was Engels who introduced D.'s work to M.) "Natural" in the quoted passage means for Marx a condition in which human energy is not a commodity. Marx & all his successors have difficulty in defining a community in which someone's energy is not used as a commodity for some purpose. It apparently means free from the degradation of the property relationship, but it doesn't appear to be clear what the positive side of this freedom is.

"Religion, family, state, law, morality, science, art, etc., are only particular modes of production and all under its general law." Again the search for "general law" with its single point-of-view--theological omnipotent structures.

As in Darwin you find the teleological creative purpose, so in Marx you find "the transcendence of all estrangement", (Freud couldn't hope for more than a balance between Eros & Thanatos.) (He was convinced in the 1844 papers, ~~that~~ before being exposed to Darwin, that some sort of counter-action was possible.) "so that man appropriates his total essence in a total manner." He does at least understand that "total" energy includes sexual energy.

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"The history of industry, ^{the} the open book of man's essential powers, the exposure ~~to~~ the senses ~~of~~ human psychology." He sees that the history of industry & of political economy are part of the nature of human beings. Through most European thought religion, art, literature are given this emphasis, but economics & technology are not. After Marx, the history of human nature must include the history of applied science. He saw, for instance, that the structure of love & marriage depends very much on the modes of production. Where does your energy go, & how much do you have left? Later Marx seems to lose his awareness of this; men simply work.

Marx in 1844 sees that "a psychology for which this, the part of history most contemporary & accessible to sense, remains a closed book, cannot become a genuine, comprehensive, & real science." Which is an answer to Freud. Unless you start from the economy of human energy expenditure in labour, sexuality, & leisure, you start nowhere. (cf. Goodman, Brown, Reich). "Machine labour is simplified in order to make a worker out of the human being, who is still in the making. The completely immature human being, the child, is simplified in order to make a worker out of him. The machine accommodates itself to the weakness of the human being, in order to make the weak human being into a machine." (Note the passive verb, which usually

carries one into theology) He attacks that political economy (Malthus, Darwin) "which preaches self-denial, the denial of life, & all human needs, like eating, drinking, books, theatre, dance halls, pubs, thinking, loving, singing, painting". In 1844, at least, he knew that humans could not be defined simply by work. "The less you are, the more you have. The less you express your own life, the greater is your alienated life, the greater the store of your estranged being. Everything which the political economist takes from him in life and in humanity, he replaces for you in money and in wealth. Money is inclined to do nothing but create itself, by itself, for everything else is after all its servant. The worker may only have enough for him to want to live, may only want to live to have enough."

The Holy Family, Marx & Engels, 1845: "Everything which is immediate, every ~~human experience~~ sensual experience, love, any & every real experience, is the center". He objects to the current materialism because "the object reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or contemplation, but not ~~as~~ human sensuous activity practised . . ."

In The German Ideology, Marx & Engels, 1845: criticism of those "who are imagining that they are weaving the web of history, when as a matter of fact they are only spinning the long yarn of their own imaginings." (the "web" has a double signification of the "biologically natural" (spider's web) and the "humanly natural", as in weaving. In early Norse & Greek tradition, weaving a web is the act of connection. In religion, as for Ghandi, spinning & weaving become instances of desirable action. But note particularly that the "natural" & the "human" become interfusing ~~alambic~~ for "necessity". Weaving designs, when applied to neolithic pots, etc., would indicate a morphological urge to feeling connection (meshing) as power. McLuhan, for instance, makes the connection between technology & Catholicism through the image of the electronic network. AC=JC! See McLuhan's teacher, Father Walter Ong, S.J.)

In GI the true vision of the human is some kind of nature uncorrupted by capitalism. But Marx moves towards Darwin with phrases like "the industrialism of philosophy", "open warfare of plants", the "feudal~~ism~~ monarchy" of theology; they see gods, meteors, fallen angels, fixed stars, as cosmic parallels to industrialization. They set up an opposition of "God the Producer" & "man the producer" (which is a radical difference from Darwin, insofar as these concepts are opposed). There will be parallels with McLuhan & Cage, in that fragmentation is a part of corruption: "For as soon as labour is distributed, each man has a particular exclusive sphere of activity which is forced upon him and which he cannot escape." In a communist society, man would not be restricted to one kind of activity: "In a communist organization there are no painters at all. At most there are people who among other things also paint." Cage & McLuhan quote the Balinese: "We don't create art; we just do everything very well." "Artist" implies producer-product-consumer.

For Marx at this stage producing means cooperation:
 "A certain mode of production or industrial stage is always combined with a certain mode of cooperation or social stage." A makes a distinction between animal & human which Darwin doesn't see: "The animal has no 'relation' with anything, cannot have." I.e., web relationship. "Only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community therefore is personal freedom possible." Unlike Darwin & Freud, rivalry is not the basis of production.

But as soon as Marx speaks of "revolution", he is faced with decisions: do you mean "due process" by steady continuity, or the catastrophic crisis of siezing power? Marx never clears up this conflict between free will & determinism. (Note that his father was a Jew, he was Lutheran.) Do changes come about because of the processes built into history, or do human beings have to design the change process for themselves? I.e., create something which doesn't exist?

The history of anarchy in America is very important, from the 1770's to Paul Goodman, by way of Emerson, Melville, Thoreau, (see Staughton Lynd, Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism, 1969). But in America, it has never had a chance. If freedom is defined by "self-reliance" (Emerson), it isn't freedom at all, according to Marx. (Freud will maintain that freedom is impossible, because of the individual-society conflict which produces "culture".)

In The Poverty of Philosophy, 1847, appears the image of washing off historical dirt & blood (implying that there is something underneath which can be purified). "The actual Genesis shows us God as world's first manufacturer." Then come images of "stripping away veils", "disguises", removing clothes to reveal nakedness; mysteries must be unmasked, ghosts must be laid; references to Hamlet. "A spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism."

The Communist Manifesto is a play of inevitability; "What the bourgeoisie produces above all are its own gravediggers. Its fall ~~the~~ and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable." It is a logical conclusion from his supposition that the advance of industry (cf. Elluel, "autonomous technology") forces the workers to combine. Alienation isolates the workers from the owners & forces them together, internationally: "Workers of the world, unite!" But this is not "universal brotherhood"; it is determination to own the means of production, & no more. "One must own one's own energy, & the earth one belongs to."

The Manifesto goes on describe a drama of international tragedy, a re-birth structure: you go through suffering to be reborn, like Oedipus, who ends up a god in a grove outside Athens. World revolution as re-birth drama. A basic image is the vampire, & other Gothic images (Poe is important in this context; "The Pit & the Pendulum" could fit inside Das Kapital. It is also a comment on "self-reliance"). Out of the death-crisis, the re-volutionary working class will arise. (One wants to ask, how do you know which workers will survive? What about the ones that die? Revolutions are always bourgeois; they are led by the intel-

lectuals, who are educated; and note well who educated them! (Golding's Lord of the Flies: he doesn't tell you what prep schools the little monsters went to; i.e., where they got their animal viciousness!) If you examine why this book is on so many school board lists, you will have a clue as to what's gone wrong.)

One must look at the way Marx continuously uses images of performance, acting, theatre, drama, which have the effect of making the action existentially "there", not invented (cf. Wm. Blake, 1799, "Error is invented") In The Class Struggle in France, 1850, it is all described as a drama, with financier "sinister Jews", peasants, rulers. Marx's fascination with disguises indicates that he is interested in denouement

In The 18th Brumaire, 1852, Engels writes in the Preface: "Marx had discovered the Law of History." (Gertrude Stein: "History tells us history tells us.") He wants all struggles to be between social classes determined by degrees of economic development. "This law bears the same relationship to history as the law of the conservation of energy bears to the physical sciences." He draws his laws from physics; Freud will draw his from hydraulics (dams bursting, etc.). Absolute certainty is required in order to predict. He speaks of the "real origins" of things.

Capital: the Process of Capitalist Production, 1856. By this time Marx had read The Origin of Species, and succumbed to the atavistic compulsion to trace origins & project omnipotent structures, which are substitutes for gods, ultimate causes, prime movers, & nature. Systems must be historically consistent, from the origin of the universe to the farthest future. Engels: "Darwin has interested us in the history of nature's technology, in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs which are the material basis of all social organization, deserve equal attention?" Marx, in letter to Engels, 1869: Darwin's discoveries are "the basis in natural history of our views". Letter to LaSalle, 1861; "a basis in natural science for the class struggle in History". At which point you're back with Malthus! In 1862 he writes to Engels recognizing Darwin's Malthusianism: "the struggle for existence applies to plants & animals, the division of labour, competition, etc." Marx sent copy of 1873 ed. of Capital to Darwin, who replied courteously; but the copy was found uncut after his death. His letters show that he had smelled atheism.

In Engels' funeral oration for Marx in 1883: "As Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history." (Jack London started here, adding Nietzsche's superman: if there are vital forces in history, the next step is to localize them in particular leaders. Thus the line from Marx reading Darwin through to Stalinism.) The dialectical method paralleled the Darwinist method. But, whereas Darwin saw no end to the struggle pattern, Marx predicted a millenium; in 1844 papers: "Communism is not in

itself the aim of human development or the final form of human society."

Marx: "Natural science will one day incorporate the science of man, just as the science of man will incorporate natural science; there will be a single science."

If systematic murder under the aegis of ideology is going to stop, we must understand the predictive nature of systematic ideology. If ideology moves out from a single point of view, as opposed to a pluralistic gestalt morphology, it is dangerous in the ways we have examined. The 1844 papers, with their sense of the relationship between human energy deployment in various ways, with their strong emphasis on both male & female sexuality, give way to abstractions based on the necessity of work within rigid grids. Though America could benefit from the application of Marxist analysis, it would not benefit from **his** later system-building preoccupations.