

## Misology as a Methodology

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### Introduction

*The most suitable if one wants to proceed [is to begin] analytically from common knowledge to settling what its supreme principle is, and then synthetically from examining this principle and its sources back to common knowledge to which it applies. Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals, 1785.*

Misology as a methodology aims not only to answer what an individual, or a group of people said about a given concept, but also what is unsaid or said incorrectly, and why it is so. Thus, it does not narrowly mean to resent sound reasoning, and rather implies mistaken, incomplete, problematic, or unprofessional reasoning. For instance, rational choice theories tell us what a rational actor (A) would do in a given case, say to ally with B to alienate C in an election. But, in reality, these actors may not always act rationally, as anticipated by our theories. Why do they not? What is missing in their calculation that lead them to act “irrationally”? Or what is missing in our calculation that lead us to misunderstand rationality? The case becomes much more complicated when it is applied to a concept. For example, why do a group of people think about liberty in a way they do? What is missing in their interpretation of liberty? Misology asks

- I. *Simplest Category*: What is the most basic concept in a given case study?
- II. *Lay-hypothesis*: What do people (e.g., an individual, a socio-economic class, an ethno-religious group, etc.) think about this concept?
- III. *Reification*: Is there anything wrong with their lay-hypothesis (or lay-knowledge)? What is missing?
- IV. *Emergence*: How could this shortcoming be explained in terms of the existing institutions from which reified understandings emerge? How does a context create an ontological veil (i.e., habitual mechanism that becomes the second nature) that causes reified lay-knowledge? And, what is this ontological veil?

The third step—reification—is the key in misology. There is always a context (world) under which a text (mind) is written. There is always a condition from which a thought emerges. Misology argues that contexts create ontological veils in the mind of people, which accordingly make people reify much more complex realities to lay-knowledge. Ontological veils are caused by social institutions and cause cognitive slips. They are similar to habitual mechanisms, which gradually become the second nature, that constrain, intervene, mediate, curtail, distract, and block the process of understanding. The veils are indoctrination, habituation, naiveté, tacit assumptions, and indeed anything that is already projected in the mind of individuals that distracts agencies from fully apprehending complexities behind social phenomena and concepts. The ultimate task of a researcher is not merely to know what was said about a concept (text), or under what conditions (context) it was said but also to recognize the ontological veil (linkage) that connects the two.

This article explains why taking this procedure (i.e. moving from simplest category to lay-hypothesis, reification, and finally emergence) is sound, and how the procedure should be gone through. It explicates the methodological assumptions, and steps that shall be taken a research. These steps need to be fully explained at first because there are fundamental differences between misology and the prevailing methodology in political science (i.e., positivism)<sup>34</sup>, as briefly mentioned in the Table 2.

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<sup>34</sup> Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, "Is This the Curriculum We Want? Doctoral Requirements and Offerings in Methods and Methodology," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 3 (2003): 379-86; Peregrine

Table 2: Misology versus Positivism

| ASSUMPTIONS     | POSITIVISM        | MISOLOGY                            |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ontology        | Dualist Realism   | Monist Constructivism               |
| Epistemology    | Objectivism       | Subjectivism                        |
| Truth status    | Objectivism       | Improved Subjectivism <sup>35</sup> |
| Beginning point | Formal Hypotheses | Lay-hypotheses                      |
| Description     | Ahistorical       | Historical                          |
| Explanation     | Linear Causality  | Dialectical Causality               |
| Research goal   | Prediction        | Pathological <sup>36</sup>          |

I shall start from scratch by explaining the philosophical foundations and methodological presuppositions in misology, as well as why it is rewarding to begin from lay-hypothesis, examine the social institutions, and then speculate what type of cognitive veils the latter projects in the mind of people that lead them to lay-knowledge. I shall define and defend ontological monism, and make suggestions, regarding where a research begins, how it proceeds, and when it stops. In doing so, I begin with a phenomenological story of how consciousness, through which mind (text) and the world (context) are fused, is called into being—episteme.

## Episteme

I was posited in a temporal space, which had no in or out to posit place and time. It was not

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Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, "'Reading' 'Method' 'Texts': How Research Methods Texts Construct Political Science," *Political Research Quarterly* 55, no. 2 (2002): 457-486.

<sup>35</sup> Improved subjectivism suggests that there are layers of understandings of a given phenomenon or concept. We cannot pinpoint what the truth is, but we can try to improve our subjective understandings of it. In order to know X (e.g., liberty), one may merely pass the first layer, whereas another person may reach deeper layers: )<sub>1</sub> )<sub>2</sub> )<sub>3</sub> )<sub>n</sub> X.

<sup>36</sup> A pathological research's aim is not to predict but to understand the roots (and solutions) of social maladies like reification.

a nonexistent void, rather an existing vacuum to which my mind could not plug me in. I was neither terrified nor pleased. I was unconscious—i was not an I yet—but, *i was*. Gradually, i retreated to my shell, to my not-yet self. As unconsciousness encountering beings, i grew into consciousness. i encountered the ungraspable non-i and the inceptive i—naked and disarmed, trembling from exposure to the vacuum. I had no coherent mind but ephemeral deliriums. My heart was lacerated by loneliness. It was real, since I began to feel it, yet the feeling was conditioned in hallucination. My veins were swollen with fear, and my bones were cracked by gravity. My flesh began to grow as though it was chewed by leprosy. i had ears, but heard things that only later on reminded me of the cacophony of the jungle's beasts and the ocean's leviathans. i heard the cracking sound of my own tortured inner voices growing like a dandelion rooting in frozen cement. i for the first time felt my inner self—but muffled by the indifferent world around me. i was paralyzed, unable to talk, or even to die. As I was sweating in pain, the opium of nonknowing was fading away; i was walking out of my shell to myself. There, the growling of beasts could sound mellifluous and the guise of monsters could look gorgeous. i heard and saw, though it was only hiss-like sounds and hellish visions. As these things—fear, loneliness, pain, sounds, and appearances—happened to me, so i turned to an I. I came into being by deconstructing the world in order for me to construct the world of mine. As the world was being changed for me, i was changed to I. These changes brought together my mind and the world of mine—knowing and being.<sup>37</sup>

This is not a fairytale, and is rather a phenomenological story of how consciousness comes into being, something like Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* in a concise, literary style. Several points to which references will be made later on abide within the story.<sup>38</sup> Most importantly, it indicates that there is no separation between my mind and the constructed world of mine. They are inseparably fused together. My mind tightly overlaps with the world in a fashion that my world is my knowledge of the world of mine. There is no gap between me and my mind,

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<sup>37</sup> Mehran Mazinani, "Words as Text, Words as Author," (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 2008), Abstract.

<sup>38</sup> For a brilliant interpretation of Hegel's idea of experience, knowledge, and consciousness, visit Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Conception of Experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1970); Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976)

and my mind and the world of mine. They tightly overlap. This is called ontological monism.

Monism establishes that it is an error to imagine that mind is an empty Popperian “net” thrown out to catch the world,<sup>39</sup> or that the world opens up itself to mind because either case suggests there must be a gap between them. If one assumes so, a researcher is asked to cross the gap between human’s mind and the external world awaiting discovery.<sup>40</sup> One reason for assuming a separation between them is due to lazy linguistic and imaginative habits. Using an analogy of seeing is elucidating. In Latin, the term for “to see” (“*animadverto*”) basically means “to turn the mind to,” and in Greek, “the perfect ‘I have seen’ is the present ‘I know.’”<sup>41</sup> As soon as we say “I see that thing,” we separate the “I” and “the thing” and tend to overlook that the act of observation resides neither in the observer nor in the observed object. Rather, it is the relation between them. Observation is the act of observing, and is not chopped to the two poles of the observer and the observed object. It is a property of neither the observer nor the observed object, but observer-observed fusion. Likewise, knowledge is the act of knowing. There is only one process of knowing taking place between mind and the world assumingly chopped to the two pieces. It is unity-in-duality, or mind-world fusion, or monism.

If one imagines that mind and the world are two drifting entities between which there is a gap (i.e., dualism), she or he would run into an epistemic impasse, which eventually necessitates leaning towards monism. One might tend to argue that monism is refutable because when, for instance, a researcher studies a phenomenon, the person situates himself within or above a new condition (i.e., a case study), and by doing so bridges the gap between his mind and the new world (i.e., condition). The situated researcher is either (i) inside or (ii) outside of the new condition, from where his mind grows. This growth is supposed to indicate that there is a gap or dualism between mind and the world crossed by learners.

(I) Insider epistemic location is a solipsist claim in the sense that it asserts that truly to

<sup>39</sup> Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Routledge, 2008), vignette.

<sup>40</sup> Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *The Conduct of Inquiry in International Relations: Philosophy of Science and its Implications for the Study of World Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, *Hegel’s Conception of Experience*, 56.

understand others, one should be/become one of them to understand the world as they do.<sup>42</sup> For example, if I am to conduct a research on the Iranian intelligentsia in Iran in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I ought to become one of them. The contextualization of a researcher in a new condition is supposed to entail that he is detached from his naturalized, personal, conceptual world, and therefore could start over afresh within a new world.

On the contrary to this claim, there is no way for one to separate his mind from his world, and then sink it in the new situation, because such a separation means evacuating one's mind from any conceptual understandings of the world. That would be a total break from the world and a regression to the hideous state of not knowing akin to the beginning story. The claim of insider epistemic location is not easy to digest because of its mystical nature; that is, the researcher is required to chop history (the world) and his flow of life (mind) into time-space slices, and then decidedly starts over from wherever he wishes as though life were a video game.

The case of the Oveysi School of Sufism could clarify my point. The schoolmaster, Nader Angha, states that in order to understand a text, a reader must experience the recorded phenomenon as though he or she is the author. If the text is divine (e.g., the Bible, the Quran, etc.), the reader should be God. To understand what, say, a piece of rock is, one should be attuned to it, that is, to experience life as if he is not only a piece of rock, but *that* piece of rock. "This can be done," according to Angha, "by revitalizing our senses, aligning our brain with our heart, and 'tuning into' the same energetic wavelength."<sup>43</sup> Angha states that "*you cannot know anything that is outside of you*, because to know something in its totality requires that you be that entity."<sup>44</sup> However, since we can revitalize our senses, according to Angha, we could be and therefore know a myriad of things from God to rock.

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<sup>42</sup> Brian Fay, *Contemporary Philosophy of Social Science: A Multicultural Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), Ch. 1.

<sup>43</sup> Mehran Mazinani and Ali Siahpush, "Truth and Cognition in Sufism," *Sufi Psychology Association Journal* 9, no. 2 (summer 2011): 5-14; Mehran Mazinani and Ali Siahpush, "The External World does not Convey the Absolute Truth," *Sufi Psychology Association Journal* 8, no. 2 (summer 2009): 35-45.

<sup>44</sup> Nader Angha, *Sufism & Faith* (Riverside, CA: M.T.O. Shahmaghsoudi Publications, 2003), 13; Nader Angha, *Sufism and Wisdom* (Riverside, CA: M.T.O. Shahmaghsoudi Publications, 1996c), 21; Nader Angha, *Expansion and Contraction Within Being (Dahm)* (Riverside, CA: M.T.O. Shahmaghsoudi Publications, 2001), 258.

Knowing, therefore, is annihilation of object and subject into each other, and it is possible only if one has access to the insider epistemic location in which the insider-researcher could adjust his frequency of life with other entities, and subsequently commit an ontological leap from physical to metaphysical realm (man → God), as well as animate to inanimate life (man → rock). One problem is that scholars like Angha take it for granted that differences (e.g., between one and others, God, rock, etc.) stop us from knowing. In order to know, we should be identical, and epistemically homogeneous with a given person or object, in the case of Angha's teachings. On the contrary, as Sartre put it plainly, "the reality of that cup is that it *is* there and that it is not me,"<sup>45</sup> and exactly this dissimilarity between us (that I am not that cup) makes us known to us. I am because I am bound to be me, and not that cup. The boundless thing that is identical with everything (e.g., me = rock = cup = God, etc.) is identity-less and therefore nothing. All-being is nothingness. Boundlessness is nihilism. "A man actualizes himself," Hegel states, "only in becoming something definite."<sup>46</sup> One might assume that since the insider thesis advocates situatedness in a given context, it actually endorses finitude. It is incorrect because in order for one to be an insider, *first* he should erase his mind, and then become situated. An "erased" mind rather connotes potential infinitude. If God once said "let there be light, and there was light," today the "revitalized" man undecidedly and naively says "let there be God, or this rock, or that cup, or an Iranian intelligentsia, and there he is God, rock, cup, and an Iranian intelligentsia." Insider-researcher claims infinity.

The problem is not only that one should understand others as an insider, but should be able to step back and remain an outsider. I assume, if such an ontological break occurs to me, I will become either clueless or a mystic figure incapable of communicating and sharing my findings with others, who are not ontologically armed like me. Being in the here and now and the out there and then is like remembering the moment that one falls asleep; it is impossible in practice

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<sup>45</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1972), 5.

<sup>46</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 133; see also the master-slave dilemma and the dialectics between negative and positive will in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*.

because one is either asleep or awake. At best, one can vaguely remember the drowsy moment right before falling asleep, that is, metaphorically speaking, some sense and feeling like the insiders. In short, knowing and being grow from *my*—and not the insider—epistemic location. The thing that is everything is epistemic-less. I am bounded, so I can know, therefore I am. In essence, the insider epistemic location is a videogame approach to knowledge.

(II) Outsider epistemic location is not better. It means to believe in elevation above a given context (i.e., being in vacuum) and to observe occurrences objectively (i.e., knowing without interpreting). If the “revitalized” insider claimer wishes a complete annihilation in a condition, and if he is undecided and naïve, the outsider claimer fantasizes a complete elevation from the condition. He is even more revitalized; he is arrogant and megalomaniacal. I hold two assumptions compacted in one sentence—humans *make meanings* in given *contexts*—which annul the outsider’s claim.

Context means to be together. The context of cloth is threads weaved together. The context of a given society is people being together. Where are the people, with whom I will be in a context, except in time and place? In order for me to learn through the field research with the tribe, first, phenomena have to appear to and for me; and in order for phenomena to appear, they must emerge in time and place. “Truth could not be,” Hegel states, “[if] did it not appear and reveal itself.”<sup>47</sup> Context is as necessary for phenomena to emerge as for humans to be able to cognize them because inescapably “we are placing.”<sup>48</sup> Being out of a context is similar to the beginning story with the difference that it claims the possibility of being posited in a temporal space that has no in or out to posit place and time—out of the context—and simultaneously to be able to make meaning of phenomena restricted to time and space—within the context. The claim of the transcendence over a context contradicts meaning-making thesis.

Meaning-making is historically associated with hermeneutical studies. The “focus on meaning

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<sup>47</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet and commentary by Michael Inwood (London: Penguin, 1993), 10.

<sup>48</sup> Edward Casey, “How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time,” in *Senses of Place*, eds. Steven Feld and Keith Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research, 1996), 19.

making,” an interpretivist political scientist, Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, points out, “is due to an ontological and epistemological presuppositions,” rather than a reductionist approach to human nature. More precisely, “assumptions about human nature are ontological assumptions. So, in that sense, interpretivists assume that human’s meaning-making capacity is central to studying human beings.”<sup>49</sup> In a softer tone: we make meanings. In a stronger tone: we cannot avoid making meanings. As soon as I said this, I turned my head and saw a fruit knife on my computer desk. I am seeing it without interpreting it: it is a fruit knife, nothing more or less. Yet, the fact that I said “it is a fruit knife” demonstrates that I am interpreting my observation through the prior concepts of fruit and knife, as well as being and time (it is). That man is walking. It seems like a non-interpreted description. Again, I am filtering the occurrence of that man and his walking through concepts of man and walking, and a set of countless interrelated concepts in the background. Even in the most succinct and judgment-free statements, as soon as knowledge is used, interpretation sneaks in.

The interpretations and expressions, however, do not mirror the world. They are *ours*, and people from different epistemic locations or communities have different understandings of the same phenomenon. By reflecting on an occurrence, different people deflect it differently. Moreover, by being engaged with an occurrence, the interpreter and the interpreted mutually affect each other. We affect the occurrence by deflecting it through our interpretation and expression, and the occurrence affects us by going through us: “our life is animated through the world [...] It is as though we are a lightening rod through which electricity flows, filtering and conveying our existence.”<sup>50</sup> We change by being gone through.

Another aspect of the meaning-making is the concept of estrangement (i.e., a rift and disconnection from within the self and the outside social and natural worlds). Meaning-making and estrangement repel each other. For Hegel, estrangement was fought by ethical life, which is a social sphere wherein a people with a shared custom communicatively make sense of their life. Hegel thought a modern person could play two roles: being a self-interested private individual, and a community-interested public agent. When these two (being for myself and

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<sup>49</sup> Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, email message to author, Aug 5, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Mazinani and Siahpush, “The External World does not Convey the Absolute Truth,” 44.

for others) are balanced, people are free and expressive, and therefore not estranged. And that, according to Hegel, was possible in the modern era. Oppositely, Marx thought in modern, class-based societies, a person divided to private versus public could not “achieve an adequate expression.”<sup>51</sup> Man “as a productive individual and an individual who produces himself”<sup>52</sup> needed a way to express himself freely by shaping the world. According to Marx, peoples were dehumanized, subjugated, and deformed under the brutish capitalism of the 18-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nonetheless, regardless of the differences between Hegel’s and Marx’s stances about the possibility of being genuinely expressive in modern societies, they agreed that where people could not make sense of their surroundings, that is, where their surroundings do not express them, they suffer from estrangement. All in all, the lack of meaning-making causes alienation.

In addition, there is an extra problem with the outsider claim. Being above the context supposes neutrality, that is, having no epistemic location. I might be able to drop an initial presuppositions (say, what I learned about the Iranian intelligentsia from the literature before examining their original texts), but then I have to adopt a new one. Knowledge should be approached from somewhere and something. (With no location, no knowledge can be gained, and without knowledge, we descend to the state of being that was depicted in the beginning story.) In the final conclusion (synthesis), regardless of how hard one tries to be neutral, there always remain elements of the initial understanding (thesis) from which the final result is reached. Outsider epistemology claims to be neutral. Additionally, as Haskell puts it appositely, although it is feasible to shift our epistemic location and re-evaluate our belief from various locations—objectivity and not neutrality—we have social and political commitments, which do not allow us to be neutral (i.e., being purely objective and above the context, so to speak).

The outsider claimer, similar to the insider claimer, thinks he can erase his mind. In fact, he thinks that he erases his mind, and it remains erased until the research ends. Their no-epistemic-location thesis is a claim of infinity. It thinks it has no location and is above every location. Unlike the insider-researcher, who humbly wanted to be something and therefore

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<sup>51</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*, 549.

<sup>52</sup> Hans G. Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx’s Introduction to Grundrisse* (unpublished manuscript, 2010), 47.

knew either this *or* that, the outsider-researcher without trying to be anything assumes knowing this *and* that—God, and this rock, and that cup, the Iranian intelligentsia, etc. In total, outsider epistemic location, neutrality, and the claim of dualism as their philosophical basis are philosophically and socially unattainable. The lack of engagement and being above a context causes conceptual (unconsciousness) and sociological (estrangement) problems. The idea of transcending a context and possessing knowledge from an outsider epistemic location makes a resemblance to the “dead-play” technique by which, even though an actor acts as though he is not a part of the play, he is actually acting and influencing the overall performance. The outsider epistemic location is a theatrical approach to knowledge.

In the end, the rejection of the insider or outsider claims does not refute the possibility of knowing. If insider and outsider positions are not realistic, and knowing is yet possible, from where does one need to begin to know?

### Simplest Category

In the Preface of *Capital* (vol. I), Marx acknowledges that “beginnings are always difficult in all sciences.”<sup>53</sup> He then opens the text with a seemingly unequivocal hypothesis—“the wealth of those societies, in which the capitalist mode of production reigns, presents itself as an ‘immense heap of commodities.’”<sup>54</sup> Marx states that, “what I proceed from is the simplest social form in which the product of labor presents itself in contemporary society.”<sup>55</sup> And commodity is the simplest form because it can be comprehended without having any knowledge of other categories, such as profit, money, capital, etc.<sup>56</sup> In other words, Marx sets off from a beginning point that would not require references to more complex phenomena; for example, to understand rent, one must know capital, but understanding capital does not require references to rent, so the latter is simpler.<sup>57</sup> Thus, Marx considers commodity to be the

<sup>53</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), trans. Hans G. Ehrbar (unpublished manuscript, 2002), xvi.

<sup>54</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), 2.

<sup>55</sup> Hans G. Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Notes on Adolph Wagner's "Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie,"* (unpublished manuscript, 2010), 68.

<sup>56</sup> Hans G. Ehrbar, “The Relation between Marxism and Critical Realism,” in *Critical Realism and the Social Sciences: Heterodox Elaborations*, eds. Jon Frauley and Frank Pearce (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 4.

<sup>57</sup> Hans G. Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Value Page at End of Grundrisse* (unpublished manuscript, 2010), 98; E. V. Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), 104-5.

simplest component of the economic system, and therefore is the beginning point.

Two points should be made clear: first, if one does not begin from commodity, and starts from, say, capital, he or she has to make references to commodity, while explaining capital. So, although commodity is not *the* necessary beginning point (i.e., one must begin from commodity, otherwise the final result will be worthless), beginning from commodity is the most efficient way of presenting and organizing the argument.<sup>58</sup> Second, commodity is not as easy to grasp as the term simplest would suggest. Indeed, the opening chapter of *Capital* where commodity is explained is the most intricate part of this magnum opus. The term simplest neither means easy to grasp, nor basic.

It is incorrect to assume that commodity is basic in the sense that it is the economic system's "real 'cell,'"<sup>59</sup> so to speak. A confusion of "basic" with "cell" may happen since Marx himself used the term cell as a metaphor. For instance, he said "the single commodity appears as the elementary form of this wealth,"<sup>60</sup> and "the complete body is easier to study than its cells."<sup>61</sup> Imagining the economic system as a body and commodities as its cells is problematic because it is a kind of methodological individualism in which individuals are replaced by commodities,<sup>62</sup> which is very different from Marx's methodology. Marx himself declares that, "my analytic method [...] does not proceed from man [i.e., methodological individualism] but from a given economic period of society."<sup>63</sup> Therefore, viewing commodity as a cell supposes a type of methodological individualism and atomist ontology that reduces the whole to one of its

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<sup>58</sup> Marx distinguishes between the mode of presentation and investigation. See Hans G. Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Capital* (unpublished manuscript, 2009), xiv. Second, Ehrbar also notes that commodity is not the necessary departing point. For instance, compare the following translations: "The analysis of the commodity will therefore be the starting point of our investigation" (Hans Ehrbar's translation). The analysis of the commodity must [be] the starting point of our investigation" (Moore/Aveling's translation) (Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Capital*, 6-7). Ehrbar further notes that Marx begins with commodity "without claiming that this is the only possibility. It can be seen as an invitation" (Ehrbar, *Annotation to Karl Marx's Capital*, 7).

<sup>59</sup> Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete*, 104.

<sup>60</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotation to Karl Marx's Capital*, 6.

<sup>61</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), xvii.

<sup>62</sup> Ehrbar, "The Relation between Marxism and Critical Realism," 3.

<sup>63</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Notes on Adolph Wagner*, 78.

elements.<sup>64</sup>

In summary, it is necessary to make a distinction between the cell (e.g., advocated by Ilyenkov) and the simplest category argument (e.g., proposed by Ehrbar). The former is unsupportable (i.e., at least, it is not misological) due to its individualist methodology. Although the latter correctly points out that commodity is the beginning point since it is the simplest category, it stops short. It considers commodity to be the beginning point because it is the “simplest social form,” but then does not pay attention to the other side of it—people’s belief in commodity as the source of wealth. Marx did begin with the simplest category, but then in analyzing this category, he *specifically* began with *people’s belief* concerning commodity. This thesis—beginning from the *people’s subjective belief* in the *simplest category*—at first seems unlike Marx’s better known teachings (i.e., one should begin from what people do, rather than believe, under certain material condition<sup>65</sup>). This requires clarification.

### Lay-hypothesis

After pinpointing the concept from which presentation begins, the researcher asks, “What do people think about this concept?” That is, the research begins from a lay-hypothesis, or people’s belief (e.g., of commodity, rather than commodity in itself), and not what the researcher thinks. Lay-hypothesis, or more generally lay-knowledge, is similar to the term lay-witness. A witness gives testimony about a crime in court, although he is not a criminologist. Regardless of his lack of expertise, the witness’s words are taken seriously by the jury and detectors, since his or her words are the leads, following which the truth could be found by experts. Similarly, lay-knowledge is to be taken seriously by researchers, regardless of the

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<sup>64</sup> There is no universal agreement on what Marxist methodology is. Analytical Marxists, such as J. Elster and J. Roemer, tried to couple rational choice (methodological individualism) to their Marxism. Some went as far as to suggest that every methodology could be coupled with Marxism. Particularly see G. Cohen, *Karl Marx’s Theory of History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), Introduction. Similarly, D. Little suggests that dialectics plays no significant role in Marx’s methodology. Oppositely, H. Ehrbar, P. Paolucci, B. Ollman, and E. Ilyenkov consider dialectics to be an inalienable component of Marx’s methodology. In this regard, see Daniel Little, “Marxism and Method,” in *Twentieth-Century Marxism: A Global Introduction*, eds. Howard Chados and David Walker, 230-247 (New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>65</sup> Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, “German Ideology,” in *Selected Works in Three Volumes* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 19.

profundity of the people's thoughts. It is such a blatant point that it hides from view. Pay special attention to the very first line of *Capital* (vol. I) and its informally phrased lay-hypothesis.

The wealth of those societies, in which the capitalist mode of production reigns, presents itself as an 'immense heap of commodities.'

*Der Reichtum der Gesellschaften, in welchen kapitalistische Produktionsweise herrscht, erscheint als eine ungeheure Waarenansammlung.*

The adjective '*ungeheure*,' which is colloquial German, underlines the informal meaning of this sentence. Our translation mixes the levels of formality as well: it uses the more formal 'immense' (immeasurably large) alongside the informal 'heap.'<sup>66</sup>

Marx begins with a lay-hypothesis phrased in a lay-language, a statement that is not only nonscholarly, but is also wrong; that is, wealth is not a collection of things that one can accumulate, but rather is a matter determined by social relations. It is not the correctness of lay-knowledge that matters, but its consequences. (It is notable that in the Preface of the first edition of *Capital*, he goes as far as saying: "I welcome every opinion based on scientific criticism," but does not heed "the prejudices of so-called public opinion"<sup>67</sup> because he is aware of the mistakenness of lay-knowledge.) In other words, lay-knowledge is to be judged in terms of its consequences, rather than correctness, because it is the belief that renders the system its perpetuation. Marx says

*With the slave's awareness that he cannot be the property of another, with his consciousness of himself as a person, the existence of slavery becomes a merely artificial, vegetative existence and cease to be able to prevail as the basis of production.*<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotation to Karl Marx's Capital*, 2.

<sup>67</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotation to Karl Marx's Capital*, x.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in G.A. Cohn, "Isaiah's Marx, and Mine," in *Isaiah Berlin: a Celebration*, eds. Edna Ullmann-Margalit and Avishai Margalit (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 126.

If we do not make meaning of the world as we do, which may be incorrect for various reasons, the social life would not be as it is. One is constrained to believe in the power of these meanings because of their real historical consequences, even though they might not be a consequence of real history, as Thomas Theorem so aptly puts it. One needs to take the belief of people (that collecting more commodities means having more wealth) seriously because the system runs by the force of this belief, although it may be just an illusion created by the fetishism of consciousness and the fetish-like character of commodity.

For instance, in some places, Marx goes as far as knowingly beginning with an assumption that is “*in fact, not the case*”: “I proceed from the assumption that it [*value of labor power*] is really paid at its full value, which is *in fact not the case*.”<sup>69</sup> He clearly does *not* begin from the point that he think is the correct theory or belief: he says “capital is the economic power that dominates everything in bourgeois society. It must form both the point of departure and the conclusion and it has to be expounded before landed property,”<sup>70</sup> but then he begins the discussion with commodity.

In the first statement in *Capital* (vol. I), Marx uses the term “present,” and immediately in the second statement says: “the single commodity appears as the elementary form of wealth.” It means commodity *appears* to be wealth, but there is something deeper, behind the appearance. It is important to know how Marx uses certain terms, such as “presents,” “seems,” “represents,” and “appears.” When he uses these words, he means to signify various things. (i) It is simply wrong to reify the system by thinking X does Q or is Y, even though X seems to be Q or do Y. (ii) If X appears to do Q or be Y, it is not only because people reify; rather, the system makes X seem/appear so. (iii) We do not have enough knowledge at the moment to conclude whether X does Q or is Y. (iv) Sometimes Marx uses “seems” and “appears” because he does not want to change his direction and elaborate on X.<sup>71</sup> Marx intends to state that the capitalist societal structure makes people reify social complexity, and this is why commodity is simply viewed as the source of wealth. However, there must be something

<sup>69</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Notes on Adolph Wagner*, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's Introduction to Grundrisse*, 98-99.

<sup>71</sup> For a fuller explanation, see Hans G. Ehrbar. *Glossary to Marx's Capital and other Economic Writings* (unpublished manuscript, 2010), 1-191.

behind it, something deeper. If the surface was everything and ultimate, if there was nothing behind the phenomenal world, Marx asks a close-ended question, “Why, then, have any science at all?”<sup>72</sup>

This suggestion—to begin from a lay-hypothesis—perhaps creates less criticism, with regards to Hegel, since he was an idealist, and therefore beginning from ideas should not have been a problem for him. In his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel suggests that in conducting a research, the first step is to show that something exists, and then explain what it is. Since concepts (e.g., wealth, beauty, freedom, etc.) cannot be pointed out, they should be sought in the subjective consciousness of individuals—what a given people think of wealth, of beauty, and of freedom.<sup>73</sup> Hegelian subjective consciousness is the lay-hypothesis from which Marx’s *Capital* begins.

However, Hegel remains unsatisfied with the lay ideas commonly and readily embraced. A given “concept as it actually is, in its truth not only may be different from our common idea of it,” Hegel states, “but in fact must be different from it in form and outline.”<sup>74</sup> For instance, “the Idea which people most commonly have of freedom is its arbitrariness [...] If we hear it said that the definition of freedom is (the) ability to do what we please, such an idea can only be taken to reveal an utter immaturity of thought.”<sup>75</sup> Unlike what is commonly and readily known as freedom by the people, Hegel recommends a search for the true meaning of it in deeper layers, that is, in ethical life.

*The unsophisticated heart takes the simple line of adhering with trustful conviction to what is publicly accepted as true and then building on this firm foundation its conduct and its set position in life [...] If they had been serious with what is universally accepted instead of busying themselves with the vanity and particularity of opinions and things, they would have clung to what is substantively right, namely*

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<sup>72</sup> It is a letter from Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann quoted in Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete*, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, trans. Bernard Bosanquet, ed. Michael Inwood (London: Penguin, 1993), 27-8.

<sup>74</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 15.

<sup>75</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 27.

*to the commands of the ethical order and the state, and would have regulated their lives in accordance with these.*<sup>76</sup>

Hegel's thoughts on Ethical Life will be discussed shortly. For now suffice to state that beginning with laypeople's lay-knowledge or subjective consciousness does not recommend an agreement, but an acknowledgement—it is how it is and how-it-is is the beginning point, even if it is not scientifically correct. The task of the researcher is to figure out what is mistaken, and how it may be caused by the habitual mechanism that is institutionally caused. Why do they misapprehend “what it is?” And why are social realities reified? To answer these questions, one should know under and from what conditions lay-knowledge emerges.

## Emergence

The idea of emergence presupposes a multilayer world, in which phenomena emerge at the empirical realm from deeper layers. In other words, not everything is at the surface; there ought to be something else underneath the surface. For instance, critical realists argue that the world is not one-layered; rather, it consists of three layers of (i) empirical or sense impression, (ii) actual, wherein events happen and therefore make sense impression possible, and (iii) real, that is underlying mechanisms that give rise to the events. Positivists recognize only the first two layers. In the case of Hegel and Marx, there is an institutional core from which phenomena emerge at the empirical surface. Taking a closer look at Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* helps to understand this point better.

The *Philosophy of Right* is divided into three spheres: “Abstract Right” (in which individuals are legal actors) “Morality” (wherein individuals listen to their moral dictums), and “Ethical Life,” itself divided into three subspheres of family, civil society, and state, or political community. Each sphere is indispensable, and at the same time, each should be transcended due to its incompleteness. The sphere of “Abstract Right” positively affirms the inviolable legality of individuals based on being the bearer of certain rights; yet, it is insufficient because it does not exhaust the humanness of individuals, since in this sphere “the subjects are involved only by

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<sup>76</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 4.

a minimal part of their personality.”<sup>77</sup> The laws designate individuals’ rights and obligations, but cannot distinguish individuals’ personalities. They are indifferent to the differences between individuals. Within the sphere of “Morality,” individuals step back, so to speak, and turn inside, that is, “the relationship of the subject with himself.”<sup>78</sup> Here one is more reflective; nevertheless, it is not sufficient because an actor oriented purely on the basis of a moral standpoint is “disoriented and ‘empty’ so long as he does not resort to certain normative guidelines drawn from the institutionalized practices of his environment.”<sup>79</sup> He or she needs some social arrangements and consensuses like culture in order to be able to distinguish good from evil. This one-sided moral standpoint pushes the argument towards the “Ethical Life,” transition which is of critical importance, theoretically and methodologically.

Regarding this transition to the sphere of Ethical Life, Axel Honneth offers a thought-provoking line of argument. By employing Wittgenstein’s concept of philosophy as “therapy,” Honneth argues that Hegel saw “social sufferings” due to a “conceptual confusion” that “held us captive.” The conceptual confusion, which is similar to the reified lay-knowledge, is the “foundation of practical attitudes in life [...] shared by social actors” rather than “just a wrong statement.”<sup>80</sup> At this point, it seems that Hegel deepens his lens, so to speak, to find the remedy for suffering, such as “solitude,” “vacuity,” “burden,” or, generally put, “suffering from indeterminacy”<sup>81</sup> in the institution of Ethical Life. The transition to the Ethical Life is where Hegel makes his shift to the core of the society from which suffering emerges, and wherein the remedy for suffering can be found.

The case of Marx is more sophisticated and straightforward. The economic institution of capitalism is the core from which class struggle and all the maladies of the working class come to the surface. In addition, to these historical phenomena there is a nonhistorical parallel world, which is not ahistorical. If something has not been actualized, a phenomenon that has not

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<sup>77</sup> Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory*, trans. Ladislaus Löb (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 33.

<sup>78</sup> Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, 37.

<sup>79</sup> Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, 39.

<sup>80</sup> Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, 45.

<sup>81</sup> Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom*, 23.

happened yet, it does not mean that it is not real. If I cannot, for instance, sell my commodity in the market, it does not mean that it does not entail exchange-value, and therefore is not a commodity at all. “A railway on which no one travels, which is therefore not consumed, is potentially but not actually a railway.”<sup>82</sup> Since the act (e.g., the purchase, unused road, etc.) has not been actualized yet, it is nonhistorical, but not ahistorical (nonreal). It is waiting in a parallel world to come into being in the phenomenal world. It is real but not actualized, and therefore not empirical. This is the depth of Marx’s multidimensional ontology.

It is clear that there is a core, which is socio-economic institution for Marx and ethical life for Hegel. After spotting the core institutions, the task of a researcher is to find institutional (logical) explanations for empirical (historical) phenomena. The logical explanations maintain that they know the reasons behind the historical occurrences.<sup>83</sup> For example, because of its particular historical context, X necessarily happened as it did. As Hegel so unforgettably said “*what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational*” and the task of philosophy is to understand what it is.<sup>84</sup> That is to say, Hegel thinks that since something exists (what is = historical), it is not only real, but also ought to be rational, and our task is to explain its necessarily logical emergence.

Marx’s position bears similarities and differences to that of Hegel. Consider the following example: Marx says, “according to Rodbertus [a German scholar] use-value is ‘logical’ thus, since man must also breathe, ‘breathing’ is a ‘logical’ concept, but not a ‘physiological’ one at all. The entire shallowness of Rodbertus, however, emerges in his contrast between ‘logical’ and ‘historical’ concepts.”<sup>85</sup> It seems that although Marx is not as compromising as Hegel (i.e., enthusiastic to accept that since something exists, it ought to be rational), he considers no contrast between historical and logical. What he objects to is to make use of a concept (e.g., exchange-value) in an historically incorrect condition (e.g., feudalism). If exchange-value

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<sup>82</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx’s Introduction to Grundrisse*, 36.

<sup>83</sup> Similarly, interpretivists aim to understand institutions in which meanings and ideas are made. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea, “Interpretive Social Science,” in *Encyclopedia of Political Thought*, forthcoming.

<sup>84</sup> Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 10-11.

<sup>85</sup> Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx’s Notes on Adolph Wagner’s*, 93.

exists, it is because its emergence is possible here and now under capitalism, and not there and then, say, under feudalism. B occurred because A prepared the conditions for its occurrence. Since a given phenomenon happened (B), there ought to be a logical explanation for it (A). The historical question (i.e., the occurrence) and the logical question (i.e., the reason behind it) complete each other.

What Marx and Hegel do is similar in the sense that they attempt to find institutional explanations for what is happening historically. Lay-knowledge is a historical phenomenon that should be understood in light of the current conditions. Marx and Hegel discovered lay-knowledge (e.g., the equation of wealth to accumulation of commodity and freedom to ability to do things) and institutions under which it is formulated (i.e., capitalism and ethical life). The next step is to understand how the institutions create lay-knowledge. Marx particularly and meticulously examined this issue under the topic of fetishism (i.e., the fetishism of consciousness and the fetish-like character of commodity), which later on became better known and expanded under the rubric of reification.

## Reification

Reification is the key to a well-rounded research. According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, to reify means to “make (something abstract) more concrete or real.”<sup>86</sup> Woodard adds that “the first syllable of the word (Latin *res*, thing) is the same root as the first syllable of the word ‘real’; and to re-ify is therefore to take as real that which is only apparently real.”<sup>87</sup> He further suggests seven definitions for reification: (i) a conceptual matter taken as a perceptual thing (e.g., reducing power to muscularity); (ii) a relational matter taken as absolute and independent (e.g., considering someone to be a brother, which is meaningful only if the person has a sibling, regardless of whether or not he has any siblings); (iii) a nonexistent phenomenon given physical reality (e.g., visualizing God, angels, and demons in perceptible forms); (iv) a subjective matter given independent, objective reality (e.g., following a mirage in the desert as

<sup>86</sup> Online Oxford Dictionary <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/reify> (accessed July 5, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> James W. Woodard, *Intellectual Realism and Culture Change: A Preliminary Study of Reification* (Hanover: Sociological Press, 1935), 8.

though it were real water); (v) a local phenomenon taken as universal (i.e., stretching the reality of something too far to the extent that it is viewed as a universal fact, such as considering morals to be universal, regardless of local differences); (vi) losing sight of the “relativity of proof and the debatability of belief” (e.g., taking mysticism for granted); and (vii) an extension of something’s reality by excluding other things (e.g., excluding the merits of a given religion by rejecting the merits of its rival religions).<sup>88</sup> Some of the definitions are clearly similar. There is something that they all share—“an unjustifiable extension of reality of the conceptual to perceptual object.”<sup>89</sup> Reification is fabrication of a thing-like character for something that is not a thing. Unlike Woodard, Hanna Arendt argues that reification is not only justifiable, but also necessary.

In order [action, speech, and thought] to become worldly things, that is, deed and facts and events and patterns of thoughts or ideas, they must first be seen, heard, and remembered and then transformed, reified as it were, into things—into sayings of poetry, the written pages or the printed book, into paintings or sculpture, into all sorts of records, documents, and monuments.<sup>90</sup>

Reification, for Arendt, is a type of materialization without which action, speech, and thought evaporate and “lose their reality at the end of each process and disappear as though they never had been.”<sup>91</sup> Reification is, at its core, fabrication.<sup>92</sup>

The actual work of fabrication is performed under the guidance of a model in accordance with which the object is constructed. This model can be an image beheld by the eye of the mind or a blueprint in which the image has already found a tentative materialization through work. In either case, what guides the work of fabrication is outside the fabricator and precedes the actual work.<sup>93</sup> Note that, in this sense (i.e., the translation of an idea into reality), reification is

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<sup>88</sup> Woodard, *Intellectual Realism and Culture Change*, 7-13.

<sup>89</sup> Woodard, *Intellectual Realism and Culture Change*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> Hanna Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 95.

<sup>91</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 95.

<sup>92</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 187.

<sup>93</sup> Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 140.

quite often and constructive. A similar thesis was made by Karl Marx. At one occasion, in *Capital* (vol. I), he says

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labor process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed notionally.<sup>94</sup>

We first envision a thing and then call it into reality. So, reification means to transfigure something abstract and conceptual into a concrete and perceptual thing. Karl Marx is the first social scientist that systematically examined this concept, although he did not use the term reification, and instead employed two interrelated concepts: the fetishism of consciousness and the fetish-like character of commodity. The statement that “the wealth of those societies, in which the capitalist mode of production reigns, presents itself as an ‘immense heap of commodities’” is reificatory since it indicates that people give a thing-like character to wealth. This can be rephrased as “people reify wealth (an abstract concept) into the form of commodity (a physical object).” Marx’s description of reification is stated in the following quote from *Capital* (vol. I):

What is mysterious about the commodity form is therefore simply that the social characteristics of men’s own labor are reflected back to them as objective characteristics inherent in the products of their labor, as quasi-physical properties of these things, and that therefore also the social relation of the producers to the aggregate labor is reflected as a social relation of objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. Through this *quid pro quo*, the products of labor become commodities, sensuous things which are at the same time extrasensory or social.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), 451-2.

<sup>95</sup> Marx, *Capital* (vol. I), 133-4.

Under capitalism, social relations and people's labor are taken as something absolute, objective, and independent. The reification of labor into the form of a commodity conceals the fact that commodity is not just a thing with physical characteristics, and rather contains subjective, actual human labor.<sup>96</sup> It hides from sight that wealth is not a thing but social relations. In other words, the tangible object conceals (i.e., fools us not to observe, or distracts us from remembering) some of the properties of the reified concept. It creates a blind spot, so to speak. But, how does it do that?

It does so by the power that we give to things. For instance, we make religions, but then our manmade gods stand between us and regulate our behavior, as if they are not our creators and we are unquestionably dependent on them. Likewise, in society, we fail to understand that commodities are the manifestation of our labor; that is our forgetfulness provides commodity with a god-like power that rules over our conduct. Under capitalism, (the production of) commodities regulate our lives. But, why do we let things master us? Our failure to see through commodity, like forgetting that gods are our creations, sneakily siphons off our power to them. Marx calls this the false consciousness of "fetishism."<sup>97</sup> This cognitive error, however, is not the real cause. Rather, it is itself institutionally created by the fetish-like character of commodity.

On the one hand, during the process of production, the labor embedded in commodity is subjective, specified, and concrete. On the other hand, during the process of circulation in the market labor is viewed as something universal and unspecified, objectively measured based on time. That is, labor is essentially the labor of a certain person, spent in a certain way; yet, it is treated and traded as something general, universally measured by time. So, labor is heterogeneous and concrete in production, but homogenous and abstract in circulation. This gives commodity, in which labor is embedded, a dual character. Commodity is really the congealment of concrete labor, yet is perceived as though it is abstract labor. The formation

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<sup>96</sup> Note that it does not mean that people are stupid because they think having more commodities brings more wealth. They are actually right at the empirical level. The problem is that they are too pragmatic, forgetful, and short-sighted, and therefore stop short and do not see through more fundamental issues at play, such as social relations of production and labor power congealed in commodities.

<sup>97</sup> Hans G Ehrbar, *Annotations to Karl Marx's 'Capital,'* 442.

of a dual character for commodity is an institutional matter. In other words, our consciousness of fetishism (cognitive slip) is caused by the fetish-like character of commodity (institutional error). As aptly stated by Theodor Adorno, the reification of consciousness is an “epiphenomenon.”<sup>98</sup> The real phenomena that cause reification are social institutions. I shall try to make this clearer by an example, below.

Marx’s idea of reification was unpacked by scholars of Frankfurt School, most eminently Georg Lukács. The basis of Lukács’ argument is the same as Marx’s. In a nutshell, he argues that social relations are objectified and acquired the character of things. The objectified social relation “seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.”<sup>99</sup> When everything is perceived as a thing, everyone treats everyone else as a thing, an instrument; this attitude becomes the second nature (i.e., a habit developed in society, wherein the reification of individuals and social relations is normalized, that creeps inside and then defines us). Commodity fetishism that brings about our second nature is “a *specific* problem of our age.”<sup>100</sup> All in all, reification is not a sheer cognitive fallacy, and is rather caused by the institution of capitalism. Every one of these theses is open to discussion. The primary and relevant question is whether reification is an institutional malady or cognitive mistake.

Leading sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in *The Social Construction of Reality*, suggest that reification is “the apprehension of the products of human activity *as if* they were something else than human products—such as the facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestation of divine will.”<sup>101</sup> By overlooking their crucial role in making their own world, humans bring about the disempowerment of themselves. It implies the dehumanization of

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<sup>98</sup> Zuidervaat, Lambert, “Theodor W. Adorno,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/adorno/>>. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 366-99.

<sup>99</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), 83.

<sup>100</sup> Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 84.

<sup>101</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 89 (original italics); Peter Berger and Stanley Pullberg, “Reification and the Sociological Critique of Consciousness,” *History and Theory* 4, no. 2 (1965): 196-211.

the world made by humans. At this point, Berger and Luckmann concur with Marx and Lukács. However, they then propose that reification is a phenomenon of consciousness, and not social institutions. “Reification is modality of consciousness,” and therefore “the possibility of reification is never far away.”<sup>102</sup> That is to say, it is a cognitive matter that may happen under any condition (e.g., tribalism, feudalism, or capitalism), and therefore is not a problem specific problem of our age. This conclusion is further supported in psychological studies. Woodard, for instance, argues that reification is caused by habituation, naiveté, and indoctrination, which are phenomena of consciousness.<sup>103</sup>

In summary, some throw the baby out with the bath water by rejecting the concept of reification. Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, for example, concludes that “Lukacs’s and Berger and Luckmann’s discussions are confusing and very probably confused. The whole thing is a swamp. Can this concept be saved? And should it? [...] Would political theorists who share those concerns not do better to abandon the concept?”<sup>104</sup> It is clear from this close-ended question that Hanna is very distrustful of the usefulness of the concept of reification. The point, according to her, is to change the condition of living and reification is not of much use in fulfilling this end. Those who take the concept of reification seriously are divided into two groups based on their causal explanations. In one group, Marx and Marxists like Lukács and Adorno try to set forward an institutional explanation for reification, and in the other group, Berger, Luckmann, and Woodard suggest that reification is a cognitive issue. The latter misses a simple point that Marx tried to make—even if reification is a cognitive matter, how reification takes place is conditioned by where one lives (i.e., social institutions).

In order to clarify the role of contextuality and situatedness in causing reification, I shall employ an example from applied linguistics. Language is an institution with certain grammatical roles and words. In English, in order to form the past tense, one should add *-ed* to the end of the majority of regular verbs, for example, walk-ed, concern-ed, etc. As a result, a great number of verbs in the past tense form end in *-ed*. In addition, there are numerous

<sup>102</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 89.

<sup>103</sup> Woodard, *Intellectual Realism and Culture Change*, 17.

<sup>104</sup> Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, “Rethinking Reification,” *Theory and Society* 16, no. 2 (Mar. 1987), 285.

nouns that end in *-ed*, such as greed, reed, heed, seed, etc. That both nouns and verbs may end in *-ed* can cause ambiguity for non-native English speakers and, as such, they may rely more on lexical items that indicate the past (for instance, yesterday, last semester, previous summer, etc.) than verbs ending in *-ed*. Therefore, it is easier and more economical for non-native English speakers to judge the temporality of a given sentence with words like “yesterday” than past-tense verb morphology (i.e., *-ed*). In this sense, when a non-native speaker reads English, he or she habitually learns to recognize “yesterday” as a more reliable indicator of the past than *-ed*. This example shows that it is the institution of language that leads to the formation of a cognitive map that looks for more obvious indicators, that is, lexical items that indicate the past more than verbs ending in *-ed*. This is analogous to Marx’s theory and his emphasis on institutions, unlike other sociologists and psychologists.

Like an applied linguist, who discovers the cognitive maps shaped by a given language, a researcher’s objective is to understand the mental pattern projected in the mind of people under certain institutions. In other words, first, it is acknowledged that reification is a byproduct of the social institutions; and second, in order to understand people’s reificatory misconceptions, which perpetuate the existing condition of life, a researcher should not only understand the context (i.e., institutions) and the text (i.e., people’s lay-knowledge) but also discover the cognitive priori that is caused by the former in the minds of the latter.

## Conclusion

By using Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* and Marx’s *Capital* (vol. I), this chapter attempts to put forth an alternative to positivist methodology. It refutes the possibility of ontological dualism, as well as insider/outsider epistemic locations, and then questions from where a research should begin, according to misological methodology. Unlike positivism, it is argued that the simplest category, as understood by people (lay-hypothesis), is the beginning point. This beginning point is evidently different from deductive positivism. That is, there is no need for projecting formal hypotheses nor, as a result, testing them; instead, people’s reifying lay-knowledge of a given concept should be taken as the starting point. Then, the lay-knowledge should be explained in light of the institutions. Lastly, and most importantly, after knowing the lay-knowledge and examining the institutions from which it emerges, researchers attempt to link

the two (i.e., the institutions and the lay-knowledge) by speculating what sort of cognitive priori institutions can create that would contribute to the formation of the lay-knowledge by preventing individuals from more fully seeing through a given phenomenon and concept.