

from heidegger to marx- rethinking philosophical humility

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Aristotle's *Metaphysics* opens with the line: "All humans by nature desire to know."

This desire, and the striving that responds to it, are what I want to take up here, with an eye to one point in particular: only by acknowledging a certain lack in ourselves, our perplexity about a topic—that is to say, only on the basis of a certain *humility*—are we at all capable of such desire and such striving. Only through humility do philosophical questions, or indeed any earnest questions, arise.

One puzzling thing about philosophy is that we find ourselves doing it—asking earnest questions about what perplexes us—before we grasp precisely what it is we

are doing or the humility that characterizes our own practice. Indeed, questions such as “what is philosophy?” and “what is philosophical humility?” appear only after the fact, arising from a philosophical practice—and a humility—already in play. Answering such questions thus involves taking up something with which we are already operatively familiar and rendering it explicitly clear to ourselves.

This—*our own philosophical practice*—is something about which we ought be particularly and vigilantly humble, particularly cautious. As the very *way* we find ourselves striving to respond to perplexity, it carries within itself the various entrenched interpretive lenses and habits that, before we’ve even thought about them explicitly, delimit and structure in advance both our questions and our responses to them. Clearly, this already operative practice, whatever its strengths and weaknesses, bears directly on whatever knowledge we might hope to obtain—and indeed on what we take “knowledge” to mean. Our initial ignorance about it should push us to understand it more clearly, so that we engage in it more effectively.

This is precisely Socrates’ focus at the outset of Plato’s *Apology*. Perplexed by the Delphic Oracle’s pronouncement concerning his wisdom, Socrates turns to his own philosophical practice, bringing it to reflect on itself. As he interrogates various purportedly wise citizens of Athens, he gradually discovers that his own proper “wisdom” is precisely his resistance to—and interruption of—misplaced confidence. In other words, he discovers his own philosophical practice to be characterized by a certain humility, by the vigilant acknowledgment of a limit: *the limit separating what he knows from what he doesn’t know.*² Indeed, Socrates’ questions arise out of and would be impossible without this humility.

And yet, assuming there is some merit to what Socrates indicates here, and assuming we should all strive towards this humility, what might this mean concretely? How does one go about acknowledging this limit successfully? How does one know when one has achieved this? And what would it mean to sustain philosophical humility?

I want to suggest that: 1. implicit in the work of Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger are insightful—and surprisingly complementary—responses to these questions; and 2. while there have been, since Herbert Marcuse’s 1928 “Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism,”³ several attempts to fuse Marxism and Heideggerian phenomenology, these attempts fall short insofar as they fail to investigate the kind of humility at work in Marx’s and Heidegger’s respective philosophical practice. Since associating “humility” with either of these thinkers will surely raise some eyebrows, I should clarify: my focus in this essay is not humility in the broad sense but solely that quite specific mode of humility requisite for rigorous philosophical inquiry.

My goal here is modest: drawing on an earlier piece in which I discuss Heidegger’s oddly reflexive analysis in *Being and Time*, I will flag some crucial but typically overlooked parallels between Heidegger and Marx; on the basis of these parallels, I will then sketch, at least in a preliminary fashion, an approach to reading Marx that should help us avoid an obstacle plaguing contemporary Marxism. Due in part to an ambiguity in Marx’s work, Marxists have struggled to provide a clear, non-dogmatic response to the question: “precisely what is the ultimate evidential basis for Marx’s claims? why ought I take these claims seriously?”⁴ While I won’t pretend to resolve this question fully here, I will suggest a way to do so, a way that requires reconsidering what Marx is doing philosophically—and what philosophical humility is.

First, though, I want to touch briefly on another effort to maintain philosophical humility: that of *modern empiricism*. As we will see, though Marx and Heidegger seem to stand on opposite sides of the fence where empiricism is concerned, one embracing at least a certain iteration of it, the other critically challenging it, matters are not so simple.

EMPIRICISM’S HUMILITY

What would it mean for a modern empiricist⁵—David Hume, for instance—to

maintain Socratic humility, to acknowledge the difference between what we know and don't know?

For Hume, respecting this limit means allowing our interpretations of the world to be shaped by the phenomena we encounter, *precisely as we encounter them*. More specifically: we must let what we say be shaped by the immediate *sense impressions* we actually have. Thus:

1. Regarding our *vocabulary*: since sense impressions, for Hume, constitute the origin of any idea we could possibly have, “[when] we entertain... any suspicion, that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but enquire, *from what impression is that supposed idea derived?*”⁶ By way of this litmus test, we can jettison those allegedly philosophical terms that are in fact empty, meaningless.
2. Regarding our *propositions*: any proposition that is not merely a trivial “relation of ideas” (e.g., a triangle is a 3-sided figure, a bachelor is an unmarried man), any proposition that actually *says* something about the world—any “*matter of fact*”—must be based on the “present [or past] testimony of our senses,”⁷ i.e., on *sense impressions*.

Consider this example, with which Hume was likely familiar: the accepted Aristotelian view, in Galileo's day, was that all heavenly bodies were perfect spheres. But Galileo insisted, on the basis of empirical evidence, that we modify this view. Specifically, observing the moon through the recently invented telescope, he noticed that there were irregularities on the moon's surface. Some of his contemporaries were so wedded to the accepted view that they challenged him to disprove the existence of an invisible, crystalline substance filling in the irregularities, producing a perfect sphere. In response, Galileo allegedly replied, mockingly, that they, in turn, couldn't prove there weren't transparent, crystalline mountains on top of their “perfect crystalline sphere.”⁸

Whatever else it is, rigorous empiricism is an example of philosophical practice reflecting humbly—critically—on itself and its most entrenched convictions. Its Socratic hope is that, on the basis of this reflection, we might be able to engage in philosophical practice more rigorously, more effectively, “[limiting]... our inquiries to such subjects as are best adapted to the narrow capacity of human understanding.”⁹ Hume concludes that we respect this limit when, in our epistemic claims, we put forth only those matter-of-fact propositions that are:

1. *meaningful* (e.g., containing only meaningful vocabulary derived from sense impressions)
2. *true* (corresponding with actual states of affairs)
3. *justified* (backed up by the testimony of our senses, i.e., *shown* to be true)

And yet, to embrace even this conclusion with dogmatic confidence would be to misunderstand the self-critical spirit of Hume’s decidedly *skeptical* mode of empiricism.¹⁰ He was well aware that even empiricism’s most painstaking effort to understand itself can stray off-course. Case in point: though he picks up the empiricist baton passed down to him by Locke and Berkeley, following through on their careful attempts to ground matter-of-fact claims on immediate sensation, he does so precisely by critically interrupting and modifying their efforts, holding them accountable to the phenomena (e.g., he jettisons Locke’s distinction between primary and secondary properties¹¹ and Berkeley’s conception of “mind” or “spirit”¹²). In short, Hume’s philosophical practice *is* empiricism scrutinizing itself critically—a precarious and tentative activity that never reaches a secure terminus but rather exercises “a degree of doubt, and caution, and modesty, which... ought for ever to accompany a just reasoner.”¹³ His mode of skepticism is no “state” at which we arrive but rather an incessant restlessness of reason, “even with regard to that skepticism [itself].”¹⁴

We will come back to this.

HEIDEGGER'S HUMILITY

Like Socrates and Hume, the Heidegger of *Being and Time* turns his attention reflexively towards his own philosophical practice and scrutinizes it; and he appears, like Hume, to offer an interpretation of what it would mean to maintain Socratic humility. Heidegger names this reflexive philosophical practice *hermeneutic phenomenology* and expresses its guiding principle midway through *Being and Time*:

...[Our] constant task is never to allow our [interpretive fore-structures] to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures *in terms of the things themselves*.¹⁵ [my emphasis]

Heidegger's odd vocabulary and mode of expression aside, this principle seems, at least in key respects, very close to that of empiricism. The expression "the things themselves" [*den Sachen selbst*] signifies "phenomena;"¹⁶ and Heidegger insists, as would Hume, that we let our interpretations of the world be shaped by the phenomena we encounter, *precisely as we encounter them*. Only in this way can we avoid transgressing the Socratic limit. To be sure, Heidegger's use of "phenomenon" is unconventional: in order to avoid the ambiguity plaguing our contemporary use of the term, he employs the original Greek "φαινόμενον," i.e., "that which shows itself, the manifest."¹⁷ But an empiricist would likely be fine with this expression, at least initially. Indeed, one could imagine Hume asking: what could "what shows itself" signify, if not sense impressions?

This principle fleshes out a phenomenological requirement emphasized by Heidegger early in the text: our interpretations must, in each case, let the phenomenon "be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself."¹⁸ Failure to achieve this results in dissimulative, *semblant* [*scheinbar*] interpretations, ones that let the phenomenon be seen from itself only "as it is not."¹⁹ This, for Heidegger, is what it means to fail to acknowledge the difference between what

we know and don't know.

And yet, if both Hume and Heidegger strive for philosophical humility by way of the same guiding principle, what constitutes Heidegger's critical distance from empiricism? If they both insist on letting encountered phenomena reshape our interpretations, wherein lies the tension between them?

First, just to be clear: that Heidegger critically challenges modern empiricism does *not* mean he undermines the legitimacy of the vast number of concrete empirical claims that scientists (and the rest of us) regularly put forth about the world. Rather, he challenges the *way* empiricism reflects on and interprets what these claims are—and aren't—ultimately doing and what their ultimate basis is. More specifically, by pushing empiricism to reflect critically on its own entrenched interpretive lenses and habits—precisely as Hume insists we do—Heidegger gradually shows that we aren't justified taking the phenomena, precisely *as we encounter them*, to be sense impressions: phenomena must be conceived otherwise.

Heidegger would certainly acknowledge that, in our experience, we *sometimes* encounter what might legitimately be called “sense impressions;” that is to say, our relation to phenomena can be passive or receptive in a certain way. But precisely how does this happen? And when? And in relation to what other, prior encounters?

Granted, striving for rigorous—humble—philosophical practice means finding myself having already set my sights on being a disinterested observer, someone who, in a hands-off theoretical manner, seeks the truth (and who else but a “disinterested observer” could successfully acknowledge the difference between what we know and don't know?). Such comportment obviously needs to be passive or receptive in some sense, given that acknowledging what is true involves *submitting* to what we encounter, allowing it to shape our views. Heidegger, like anyone doing philosophy, finds himself committed to this in some sense. And yet, according to Heidegger, when, in our attempt to be disinterested observers, we *rigorously*—Socratically—turn our gaze towards the very philosophical practice

in which we are engaged, this practice, this seemingly disinterested observation—“theory” in the broad sense—reveals itself to be quite different from what we initially took it to be; *and we are thus obliged to modify our interpretation of it.*

Heidegger’s phenomenological description of philosophical practice is sometimes confusing and difficult to follow, employing odd terminology in unusual ways. But there is good reason for this: he is trying to interrupt the entrenched and misleading interpretations we find ourselves already employing so that we start to notice things we should have been noticing all along. I have discussed this in detail elsewhere.²⁰ Here, I will restrict myself to five broad points that should be uncontroversial to those familiar with Heidegger—followed by my primary, more controversial point about Heidegger’s philosophical practice.

First, Heidegger shows that, when we attempt theoretically to “just look at” phenomena—as philosophers tend to do—we have in fact already modified the everyday way in which we actually encounter them. That is to say, in theoretical observation we no longer interpret the phenomena *precisely as we encounter them*. Indeed, our primary way of relating to things in the world

is not just a fixed staring at something that is purely present-at-hand.... If [theoretical] knowing is to be possible as a way of determining the nature of the present-at-hand by observing it, then there must first be a *deficiency* in our having to do with the world concernfully [*besorgenden*] [i.e., practically].²¹

What we tend to think of as disinterested theoretical knowing is no immediate relation to phenomena but rather a *deficiency* in—a *modification* of—the relationship to phenomena that we already have, a relationship that precedes and underlies any mere observation. More specifically:

When [our practical] concern holds back from any kind of producing, manipulating, and the like, it puts itself into what is now the sole remaining mode of [comportment], the mode of just tarrying alongside.... This kind of

Being towards the world is one which lets us encounter entities within-the-world purely in the *way they look* () (ibid.).²²

Things encountered in this derivative, modified way are what Heidegger refers to as the “present-at-hand” [*das Vorhandene*].

Secondly, in contrast to this derivative, modified relation to phenomena, our predominant everyday encounter with them happens in our *practical* engagement with what Heidegger calls ready-to-hand “equipment” [*das Zeug*]: my encounter with doorknobs, shoes, pens, steering wheels, etc., takes place not by way of “observing” them but via *using* them. And, in this usage, I encounter these phenomena not one at a time, as discrete things; rather, I encounter them, in the first instance, as *interconnected*, as a *coherent totality* or backdrop-context with which I am already familiar:

Equipment...always is *in terms of* its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These ‘Things’ never show themselves as they are for themselves so as to add up to a sum of *realia* and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us...is the room....Out of this the ‘arrangement’ emerges, and it is in this that any ‘individual’ item of equipment shows itself. Before it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered.²³

Consider, for instance, what it means for someone to know their way around their workshop: as I pursue some determinate practical goal (e.g., gluing a broken chair), it is on the basis of my tacit familiarity with the interconnected, already organized totality of available equipment that I am able to restrict my focus to this or that “ready-to-hand” [*zuhandene*] tool such that it stands out explicitly against the backdrop, as I reach out and grab *it* rather than something else. And indeed, just as I explicitly encounter any particular, discrete tool only in terms of and on the basis of my prior familiarity with some practical context, likewise, and more broadly, an explicit comportment towards *any* particular, discrete entity within

the world is possible only on the basis of my prior familiarity with some ready-to-hand totality.

Thirdly, this practical engagement whereby I encounter phenomena is in each case *interpretive* (according to Heidegger's broad, unconventional use of the term "interpretation"[*Auslegung*]).

In any given equipmental totality with which we're already familiar—within which we know our way around—we don't typically encounter ourselves "prior to taking action," gazing disinterestedly at the available practical possibilities in front of us (hammer, saw, screwdriver, wrench, etc.); rather, we find ourselves as already actively engaged, in the swim of things, e.g., reaching out for *this* hammer, in order to fasten *this* board to *this* wall, for the sake of *this* shed we are building. In short: I *interpret* this hammer—I zero in on it—as something within my equipmental totality with which to achieve this practical goal. In each case, interpretation restricts its focus and activity to some specific possibility against and on the basis of a backdrop that we already understand, a totality that makes such zeroing in possible. In each case, our interpretive comportment exhibits this "from... towards" structure: it has already set out *from* a familiar holistic context *towards* this or that concrete possibility within it (e.g., grabbing this steering wheel, listening to this song on the radio, walking through this door, speaking about this phenomenologist, etc.).

Finally, this interpretation, this zeroing-in, is *not* an optional activity we engage in here or there, from time to time. That we exist *is*, in each case, to find ourselves always already interpreting.²⁴

Fourthly, Philosophy's very attempt to "talk about the world" humbly—disinterestedly—by putting forth true propositions about it, is itself irreducibly *interpretive* in the above-mentioned sense. This requires that we radically rethink what such talk is—and isn't—doing.

When Hume discusses "judgments," or when contemporary philosophers

discuss “propositions”, they focus primarily not on the activity—the gesture—of assertion but rather on what they take such gestures to be *putting forth*: something present-at-hand that can be considered and discussed theoretically, something that has a “truth value.” Heidegger would insist that such a focus is premature if it misinterprets 1) the assertoric gestures that puts forth such propositions or 2) the relation between the gesture and what is put forth. And indeed, for Heidegger, “assertion”[*Aussage*] is precisely a mode of interpretive comportment: it is a way of zeroing in on specific, concrete possibilities within and against a backdrop that we already comprehend.²⁵

To be sure, the act of asserting certainly *produces* something that can then subsequently be taken up and looked at as something present-at-hand. If I were to say to you “there are blackberries behind the barn!” you might well respond (for instance, if you were a logician): “‘There are blackberries behind the barn’ is an atomic proposition.” And yet, apart from whatever present-at-hand thing it puts forth, an assertoric gesture is itself an action, an interpretive pointing out: the way it zeroes in on specific possibilities is not to “build a shed” but to *show* something, to draw others’ attention to it. For instance, my literally pointing to the clock on the wall, ostensibly, is a way for me, in the midst of all the equipment in the room, to direct your interpretive attention solely to this piece, such that everything else fades into the background; likewise, my *saying* “the clock on the wall is five minutes fast”—my assertoric gesture—is a discursive mode of precisely the same interpretive pointing out. In contrast, what we call “propositions” are merely what is left in the wake of such gestures; they are what we encounter when, after the fact, we take up the product—the “husks”—of these gestures as something present-at-hand.

One key point emphasized by Heidegger is that this assertoric mode of interpretive zeroing in is extremely narrow: unlike our non-discursive modes of interpretation that still keep in view the backdrop in terms of which they zero in on this or that concrete possibility (grabbing this hammer, that screwdriver, etc.), the tendency of assertion—of discursive pointing out—is to “dim down” this backdrop and

focus solely on what can be isolated in the foreground as something present-at-hand.²⁶

At any rate, assertion is, as Heidegger emphasizes in §7 of *Being and Time*, the predominant way in which philosophy shows things. And so, philosophy cannot fully—and humbly—comprehend its own practice if it fails to reflect on and comprehend this mode of showing.

Fifthly and finally: because we exist in a world with others, in a world that is historical, our interpretive habits and structures—both the nondiscursive and discursive *ways* we zero in on phenomena—are passed down and become entrenched: for the most part, as I comport myself towards this or that specific concrete possibility, I tend to do so *in precisely the way I have encountered most people doing so*. Thus, I tend to build my shed the same way my neighbours built theirs, using the kind of tools they used; I tend to interpret the shape of the heavenly spheres the same way the scholars who preceded me interpreted them; and I tend to take up and interpret notions like “sense impression” in the very way they’ve been interpretively handed down to me.

Heidegger refers to the entrenched habits, structures and vocabulary into which we find ourselves historically thrown as our “*facticity*” [*Faktizität*]; and it is against this that humble philosophical practice is always obliged to struggle (which is why, for Heidegger, philosophical practice is irreducibly *historical*).²⁷ Again: “...[Our] constant task is never to allow our [interpretive fore-structures] to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.”²⁸

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How, then, *do* we encounter “sense impressions”? And when? And in relation to what else?

For Heidegger, “sense impressions” are indeed something we encounter—but only when we have already modified our interpretive relation to phenomena, narrowly comporting ourselves towards what is “present-at-hand in the ready-to-hand.”²⁹ Only by “dimming down” the relation we already have to ready-to-hand phenomena can we isolate this or that abstract “sense impression.” For instance, while our primary way of interpreting a hammer is to pick it up and use it, it is also possible to disengage from such usage and “just look at it”—or just “make assertions about it”—as something present-at-hand. Only once we’ve opted for this narrow interpretive comportment can we then narrow our focus further, isolating and talking about the present-at-hand sense impressions we encounter *in* our “just looking at the present-at-hand hammer”:

It requires a very artificial; and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise’. The fact that motor-cycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case [we]... already [dwell] alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; [we] certainly [do] not dwell proximally alongside ‘sensations.’³⁰

But note, Heidegger is not suggesting that assertions about the present-at-hand (e.g., our assertions about “sense impressions”) are simply “false”; indeed, we can—and should—make assertions about such things. But these assertions are truncated, one-sided and *semblant*, if they fail to acknowledge the various backdrop phenomena—the “things themselves”—that underlie and render possible presence-at-hand. As I mentioned in my *fourth* point above, any attempt to “talk about things,” i.e., any body of assertions, is always directed interpretively towards the present-at-hand in a way that dims down all else. This is one reason philosophers have such a difficult time successfully acknowledging backdrop phenomena by way of their assertions; and it is one of the reasons my *fifth* point, above, is such a crucial feature of hermeneutic phenomenology: only by taking up and modifying our own entrenched interpretive habits—in this case, only by somehow taking up and pushing back against this problematic assertoric tendency—can we hope to let backdrop phenomena be encountered precisely in

the *way* they show themselves from themselves.

The irreducibly *responsive*, factually situated nature of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology should make it clear why his relation to empiricism is neither a simple endorsement nor a rejection of it: he starts out from empiricism's guiding principle; but he applies this principle, reflexively, to empiricism's *own* operative notions of "sense impression" and "judgment" (i.e., proposition). In short, Heidegger brings empiricism—*on its own terms*, as it strives to acknowledge the difference between what it knows and doesn't know—to modify its interpretations such that they better let the phenomena be encountered precisely as we encounter them, including the phenomenon of its own philosophical practice. As far as Heidegger is concerned, empiricism isn't *replaced* by hermeneutic phenomenology; rather, when carried through rigorously, humbly, empiricism *becomes* hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is less a method Heidegger introduces than a name for what all rigorous philosophy—including Hume's tentative, vigilantly self-scrutinous skepticism—moves toward, whether it realizes this explicitly or not.

Before turning to Marx, we need to consider, at least briefly, my primary, controversial point about Heidegger's philosophical practice, a point concerning an often overlooked complication at the heart of his hermeneutic phenomenology.

Thus far, my synopsis suggests that Heidegger presents an account of philosophical practice—and of philosophical humility—that functions as a kind of "correction" of the empiricist account. This isn't really what is going on. To be sure, he does present an account of sorts (*Being and Time* is, after all, largely a collection of assertions); but it is plagued with a problem. *On the one hand*, Heidegger states explicitly that: 1) philosophy shows primarily by way of theoretical assertions;³¹ and 2) theoretical assertions are capable of zeroing in solely on what is present-at-hand.³² And yet, *on the other hand*, the primary phenomena that philosophy is most obliged to show, i.e., to interpret rigorously by way of its responsibly modified assertions, are *not* present-at-hand phenomena but rather what I referred to

above as “backdrop” phenomena (e.g., the ready-to-hand, worldhood, Dasein’s “there”[*Da*], Being, temporality, etc.). Thus, it would seem that, due to the very nature of theoretical assertion, philosophy is *incapable* of letting the most basic phenomena be encountered precisely as we encounter them, i.e., without dissimulation. Indeed, Hume would likely insist, skeptically, that such alleged phenomena lie beyond the limit of the knowable.

I take this to be a fraught issue in *Being and Time* that Heidegger does not—at least in the published portion of the text—address sufficiently. Nevertheless, on my reading, he provides the tools necessary for resolving this problem. The key point to keep in view is that assertoric gestures can successfully show things in *two* distinct ways:

1. Assertions about present-at-hand *phenomena*—precisely in their capacity as *successful assertions*—can reveal these phenomena, without dissimulation. That is to say, the present-at-hand is precisely what these assertions, in the *way* they zero in interpretively, are capable of pointing out successfully.
2. In contrast, *philosophical* assertions—assertions about more elusive, backdrop phenomena—are capable of pointing out these phenomena successfully only insofar as they *fail as assertions*. There are some cases where letting our interpretations of the world be shaped by phenomena precisely as we encounter them requires *interrupting* the body of assertions about them that has been handed down to us, “clearing the ground,” as it were, so that the phenomena in question are no longer dissimulated as something merely “present-at-hand.”³³

Consider this concrete example: “*there is a difference between present-at-hand and ready-to-hand phenomena.*” On the one hand, this assertion—which summarizes one of Heidegger’s key points in *Being and Time*—certainly attempts to point out a crucial backdrop phenomenon (the ready-to-hand). On the other hand, the

assertion itself, in its capacity as a theoretical assertion, *fails*: while it strives to point out—without dissimulation—the difference between presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand, the very fact that it is a theoretical assertion means it reduces readiness-to-hand to a present-at-hand thing, thereby dissimulating the very difference it strives to point out. And yet, it is through its explicit failure as an assertion—through its assertoric self-interruption—that the interpretive gesture nevertheless *succeeds* in a different way, letting the phenomenon “be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself”:³⁴ in this gesture, the backdrop phenomenon is successfully “lit up” for us, pointed out as precisely that which withdraws or “withholds itself” [*Ansichhaltens*] from all the present-at-hand things that assertion is able to point out.³⁵ Only here do we overcome the dissimulation operative in the way we normally talk about such phenomena, finally attaining “knowledge of the things themselves”—albeit, in an utterly counterintuitive way that forces us to rethink, quite radically, what philosophical showing—and philosophical knowledge—are.

So we see that, notwithstanding its insistence on a restless skepticism “even with regard to... skepticism,” Hume’s analysis leaves a key assumption uninvestigated: it takes for granted that the limit dividing the known from the unknown is equivalent to the limit circumscribing true, justified—*successful*—propositions. It fails to consider the possibility, exhibited by Heidegger, that the most radically important phenomena might be successfully pointed out, philosophically, only via assertoric self-interruption.

To recap: on my reading, Heidegger offers us no proper stance, no terminal, uninterrupted “account,” nothing secure to hold on to. Philosophical humility, for him, is in each case carried out via an arc of inquiry that must be repeated over and over, starting out from the concrete discursive and nondiscursive circumstances into which we find ourselves factually thrown, and culminating in an *interruption* that successfully points out the “backdrop” phenomenon we have been striving to reveal:

1. We cannot but start out from the entrenched interpretations and vocabulary in which we find ourselves situated;
2. We bring these interpretations—on their own terms—to modify themselves into a new account that better points out the phenomenon; and yet, inevitably,
3. This account reaches a point where it can successfully point out the phenomenon only when—at a decisive juncture that implicates the whole account—it interrupts itself as a coherent collection of theoretical assertions.

Incidentally, while Levinas is certainly right that there is a “totalizing” aspect to Heidegger’s (and indeed to every) philosophical effort,³⁶ he misses that this marks a *penultimate* step for Heidegger, one that gives way to a mode of showing that interrupts any possible totalization, any graspable whole.

As I’ve indicated, this is but a rough synopsis of a highly complex issue. It would take too much to clarify the implications my reading has for the whole arc of Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis, for assessing the relationship between *Being and Time* and Heidegger’s subsequent work, or for rethinking philosophical showing as such. In any case, as I’ve argued elsewhere,³⁷ reading Heidegger in this way helps us make sense of some of his most perplexing claims—this one, for instance: “There is no Heideggerian philosophy; and, if there were one, it wouldn’t interest me.”³⁸

MARX’S HUMILITY

While Marx clearly holds himself at arm’s length from the philosophical tradition in certain respects, the nature of his critical distance is ambiguous. That he grappled with so many different kinds and registers of issues leaves us with an incomplete and disjointed—and in no way systematic—body of work. Some

key segments, often precisely where one would like to have seen much more philosophical elaboration and clarification, leave us with unanswered and often undeveloped questions, making it difficult to produce a coherent account of what he is doing as a whole, of how his approach and views shift over time, of his precise relation to other philosophical lines of inquiry, etc.³⁹ To whatever extent Marx himself explicitly worked out the philosophical implications of his own insights (very much an open question), his writing leaves us many dots to connect.

Keeping this ambiguity in mind, perhaps we ought begin by asking: is anything like “philosophical humility” even on Marx’s radar? There are passages that might make one wonder.

Most famously, for instance, we have the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, where Marx appears to distinguish himself from what philosophers do, humbly or otherwise: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”⁴⁰ And *The German Ideology* opens with Marx’s and Engel’s scathing critique of their contemporaries who, naively committed to liberating people by way of philosophical reflection, only ever end up “fighting against ‘*phrases*’”⁴¹—and do so only by way of yet more phrases. As Marx and Engels put it: “It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.”⁴² As they emphasize, later in the text: “The real, practical dissolution of these phrases, the removal of these notions from the consciousness of men, will... be effected by altered circumstances, not by theoretical deductions.”⁴³ These are just a few of the spots where Marx indicates that: 1) philosophical discourse arises from and is shaped by underlying material conditions about which it is largely blind; and 2) changing the world—revolutionary practice—is not a matter of subordinating collective action to some abstract philosophical vision.

And yet, whatever distance Marx takes from the philosophical tradition, he obviously strives to move past ideological dissimulation and “get to the bottom of things” about the material world; and, though he seeks truth not for its own sake

but ultimately for the sake of revolutionary practice, that he is nevertheless seeking it requires a certain *humility*. Moreover, realizing that the only theoretical tools and materials at his disposal come from the philosophical tradition (e.g., from Hegel), Marx, like Hume and Heidegger, turns his own inquiry back on itself, pushing it to understand itself better in the way it arises from and responds to the philosophy that precedes it—and pushing it to modify itself accordingly, so that it seeks truth more effectively. Thus does Marx investigate: 1) philosophy's emergence from the concrete "division of material and mental labour;"⁴⁴ 2) the historical-material conditions underlying—and radically limiting—philosophy's attempts to "produce a correct consciousness about an *existing* fact;"⁴⁵ and 3) the way philosophical ideas and views arise out of and function to sustain ruling class interests.⁴⁶

But if Marx strives to comport himself towards both the material world and his own inquiry in a philosophically humble manner, what shape does this humility take, concretely, in his work?

We find a clue in his various appeals to *empirical evidence*. For instance, in *The German Ideology*:

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can be made only in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live....These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.⁴⁷

In this text, Marx refers repeatedly to this empirical basis. For instance: "Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production."⁴⁸ Indeed, he goes so far as to say that, when we conceive things "as they really are and happened, every profound philosophical problem is resolved...into an empirical fact."⁴⁹ So here we seem to have Marx's response to the question: "what is the ultimate basis for your claims? why ought we take your claims seriously?"

Granted, Marx doesn't go into further detail in these passages: precisely what he means by "empirical" is left unclear. And obviously, not every appeal to empirical evidence indicates an "empiricism" (e.g., Kant—by no means an empiricist—employs both empirical *and* a priori modes of evidence). Moreover, Marx takes pains to distinguish himself from the "abstract" modern empiricists.⁵⁰ Finally, Marx's self-professed "dialectical method,"⁵¹ inasmuch as it appeals to a totality exceeding and situating any discretely encountered empirical datum, would seem irreducible to empiricism (we will come back to this). But the extent to which Marx prioritizes empirical evidence here, claiming that his premises are verified in a *purely* empirical way, shows that he is an empiricist of some sort—at least in the broadest sense of the term.⁵²

So what can we glean from Marx's elliptical remarks about empirical verification? Is his empiricism consistent with Hume's? Would it immediately fall under Heidegger's critical scrutiny as something requiring interruption?

It is important to keep in mind, first of all, that Marx's empiricism functions as an interruption of the idealism to which he critically responds:

My dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking...is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.⁵³

Marx wants to curtail the excesses of Hegelian idealism by bringing it back to Earth, by rendering it thoroughly materialist—which requires grounding our claims in the empirical register.

However, closer attention reveals something surprising. While it might seem to go without saying that empirical evidence always involves, at the very least, an appeal to passively received sense impressions, certain passages suggest that, for Marx, this

appeal is misguided. For instance, concerning one of his materialist contemporaries, he writes: “Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking* [e.g., Hegelian idealism], appeals to *sensuous contemplation*; but he does not conceive sensuousness as *practical, human-sensuous activity*”.⁵⁴ To be sure, one *might* interpret Marx’s claim here to concern not the nature of “empirical evidence” as such but rather the fact that Feuerbach ought have directed his empirical attention more narrowly towards “human activity” specifically. But this interpretation would miss Marx’s quite radical point:

The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things [*Gegenstand*], reality, sensuousness are conceived only in the form of *the object or of contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectivity....Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from conceptual objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective activity*. Hence, in *Das Wesen des Christentums*, he therefore regards the theoretical attitude [rather than the practical] as the only genuinely human attitude...⁵⁵

Here, Marx stresses that the problem is Feuerbach’s *own* theoretical comportment, i.e., the attitude whereby, in a hands-off way, the thinker just looks at the world contemplatively and thereby believes he gains access to the evidence received via the senses. Granted, Marx, in keeping with empiricism, still prioritizes “sensuousness;” but, by insisting that the most immediately sensuous is “practical human *activity*,” he turns the notion of “passively received sense impression” on its head. For Marx, Feuerbach’s attitude misinterprets the most basic phenomena to which we have access: what we encounter not when we step back and observe some present-at-hand given but when we ourselves are *practically engaged*.

This, our most immediate active engagement—rather than passively received sense data—is the “empirical” evidence to which Marx appeals, the evidence that ultimately verifies his premises. Indeed, this activity is the very “matter” of his materialism.

Marx underscores this by emphasizing that, on the one hand, when we observe and talk about humans as objects, we find that they “can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like.” In contrast, “[*they*] *themselves* begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce.... As individuals express their life, so they are.”[my emphasis]⁵⁶ It is on this activity, this praxis in which we find ourselves already engaged, that we must focus; *this* is the phenomenon we must investigate, if we are to be rigorously empiricist in Marx’s sense.

The proximity to Heidegger should be clear: just as Heidegger brings empiricism to transform itself into hermeneutic phenomenology, Marx pushes it to transform itself into historical materialism. Thus does Marx distinguish himself from “the [modern] empiricists (themselves still abstract),” for whom history is but a “collection of dead facts.”⁵⁷ Moreover, like Heidegger, Marx insists that theoretical comportment can understand itself only if it traces its origin back to the practical register:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. That is to say, not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but setting out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process....Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.⁵⁸

And note that for Marx, as for Heidegger, this empirical “earth” from which we set out (i.e., the concrete phenomena which ought shape our interpretations) is no jumbled manifold but the internally differentiated and dynamic social *whole* of practical engagement in which we find ourselves immersed.⁵⁹ Thus, Karel Kosík⁶⁰ is right to dismiss Karl Popper’s critique of Marx: Popper misses the mark from the start inasmuch as he dogmatically employs an unclarified—and unjustified—*atomistic* conception of empirical evidence,⁶¹ thereby failing to acknowledge the

interconnected, holistic character of “the things themselves.”

And finally, again like Heidegger, Marx 1. consciously takes up and starts out from precisely the interpretive vocabulary, habits and structures he finds handed down to him and 2. pushes these interpretations to modify themselves—on their own terms—such that they better point out the phenomena we encounter. For instance, with respect to the political economy of his day (e.g., Adam Smith, Ricardo, etc.), Marx writes in his *Economic and Political Manuscripts of 1844*:

We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws....On the basis of political economy itself, *in its own words*, we have shown that the worker sinks to the level of a commodity and becomes indeed the most wretched of commodities.⁶² [my emphasis]

I suggest, contra Novak and Althusser, that what Marx describes himself as doing here with political economy he *also* does with empiricism, employing “its own words” not in order to oppose it but in order to help it more effectively—more rigorously—do the very thing it is already striving to do.

So, here is my closing question—and it is an earnest question, not at all rhetorical: given Marx’s ambiguity concerning what he is doing philosophically; given his commitment to philosophical humility—coupled with a seemingly paradoxical commitment to *break* from philosophy (e.g., the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach); given that, like Heidegger, Marx strives to acknowledge a register of underlying “practical” phenomena inevitably dissimulated by theoretical observation (e.g., Feuerbach); and given that, again very much like Heidegger, Marx consciously takes up and starts out from the interpretive vocabulary, habits and structures which he finds handed down to him, factually, in order to modify these interpretations, on their own terms, such that they better point out phenomena—*given all these things, might it be worth considering whether Marx’s philosophical humility follows a path that is ultimately, like Heidegger’s, self-interruptive in certain key respects?*

More specifically, is it possible that Marx 1) consciously starts out from the entrenched

interpretations in which he finds himself situated, 2) strives to transform these entrenched interpretations—on their own terms—into an account that is shaped by the phenomena *precisely as we encounter them*, but 3) reaches a point where—at least with respect to certain basic phenomena—successfully pointing out these phenomena is achieved only by way of the account’s self-interruption? In other words, might there be a sense in which, just as there is ultimately no over-arching Heideggerian account that escapes self-interruption, no “Heideggerian philosophy”, there is also no “Marxist philosophy”?

Perhaps Derrida was right to wonder whether “the idea of Marxism—the self-identity of a Marxist discourse or system or even a science or philosophy—is not in principle incompatible with the event Marx.”⁶³

One might object that such interruption would undermine Marx’s most important work, torpedoing his empirically concrete political economical and historical materialist accounts; but this misunderstands the register at issue here. As we see in Plato’s “Good,” Kant’s “unconditioned,” etc., our assertoric showing becomes problematic only where our line of inquiry runs up against the question of *ultimate* foundations—and no concrete account of the world can avoid this question.⁶⁴ What I’m suggesting is no nihilistic destruction of “the empirical details” but rather a re-evaluation of the explicitly *philosophical* junctures in our accounts, those spots where these accounts themselves oblige us to *show* the ultimate evidential basis for our various concrete claims.

Of course, Marx’s primary concern is liberation through collective revolutionary action—not theory. Nevertheless, such action is inextricably connected to the pursuit of truth. One advantage of interpreting Marx’s philosophical practice as self-interruptive: it helps us reconcile our obligation to talk about phenomena *precisely as we encounter them* with the famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it.”⁶⁵ While one *could* view this thesis as an exhortation to “break free from philosophy,” i.e., to set it aside and instead engage in revolutionary practice purged of theoretical

concerns, this fails to acknowledge the philosophical humility that, as we have seen, is very much alive in Marx's work. On the other hand, if we view this passage as an exhortation "for philosophy to break free from itself" at decisive junctures, i.e., to push certain entrenched interpretations to the point where they interrupt themselves, and if—contra Hume—we stop assuming that successful philosophical showing happens only via successful assertions, it would then seem that philosophy can: 1) help us better point out phenomena *precisely as we encounter them*, thereby fulfilling its own humble task, while 2) helping in its own small way to clear away the dissimulative—ideological—obstacles undermining the revolutionary efforts of organized labour.

As indicated at the outset, my goal here is modest: I've proposed an approach to reading Marx, in light of Heidegger's early work, that might help Marxists clarify how his claims are justified and how his thought connects with the philosophical tradition. In my outline of this approach, I've sidestepped multiple questions that such a reading would have to take up explicitly—first and foremost: the question of *dialectical method*. A developed reading of Marx would, at the very least, need to address these two issues in detail:

1. Marx's reference to "purely empirical" verification notwithstanding, his primary interlocutor in the philosophical tradition is not Hume but *Hegel*, whose method Marx claims to be the "direct opposite" of his own. But precisely what does this mean? What does Marx—rightly or wrongly—take Hegel's dialectical method to be? What, in it, is he striving to preserve? And what is he modifying, reversing? Clearly, Marx agrees with Hegel that, in some respect, "[the] true is the whole"⁶⁶ and that dialectical method cannot but engage this whole; but Marx also takes Hegel to have greatly exaggerated the role "the Idea," consciousness, and self-consciousness play in this irreducibly *material* whole—and in the acknowledgment of it. Precisely how Marx takes up and modifies Hegel's whole, dialectically, the extent to which his approach dovetails with Heidegger's interruptive acknowledgment of "holistic" backdrop

phenomena, and whether the very terms “whole” and “totality” ultimately require interruption of some sort, warrant thorough investigation.

2. While Marx’s claims about his own dialectical method are sketchy, some of them seem, at first glance, to be incongruous with the kind of interruptive showing I’m proposing here. Specifically, Marx indicates that, while we must certainly set out from empirical phenomena, “immediate being,” taken by itself, is but a “pure semblance,” i.e., “*the phenomenon of a process taking place behind it*”⁶⁷ (for example, the immediately observable circulation of commodities in the marketplace is possible only on the basis of underlying features of the concrete whole that are *not* immediately observable). In other words, whereas Heidegger speaks of the most elusive, primal phenomena as having nothing behind or beneath them, Marx appears to be striving for an account that moves *beneath* one-sided, surface phenomena in order to grasp the dynamic, internally differentiated concrete whole situating them and making them possible: he seems to want an adequate—uninterrupted—assertoric account. In his *Grundrisse*, for instance, Marx indicates that a rigorous theoretical account is something we *produce*, a “working up of observation and conception into concepts” such that, by way of careful abstraction, we achieve a “*reproduction of the concrete [whole] by way of thought... as the concrete of the mind.*” [my emphasis]⁶⁸ This, too, is obviously a major issue requiring careful consideration. Here I will just make two tentative points: a) when Marx refers here to the “pure semblance” of immediately grasped phenomenon, he is referring not to the “phenomenon” in Heidegger’s sense of the term but rather to what Heidegger calls “semblance” [*Scheinen, der Schein*], whereby the phenomenon is taken up by us *not* in the very way it shows itself but rather in a dissimulated mode, “as it is not;”⁶⁹ I would suggest that, since both thinkers insist we strive to produce an account that moves past semblance, there is no real tension between them here. Moreover, b)

since, in the *penultimate* step of his philosophical showing, Heidegger *also* strives to reproduce the concrete whole “in thought,” i.e., in an assertoric account, our question should be whether, for Marx, such an account reaches a point, as it does for Heidegger, where it successfully points out the most crucial phenomenon it has in view—i.e., *the material world as such*—only by interrupting itself.⁷⁰ Recall that, in keeping with Hegel,⁷¹ Marx repeatedly acknowledges a kind of dissimulation resulting not from ideological forces but from the very nature of conceptual abstraction, which fails to capture the elusively dynamic, fluid character of phenomena.⁷² Granted, such abstraction and the assertoric accounts we produce by way of it are indispensable for Marx; but he takes pains to emphasize that, viewed apart from the dynamic phenomena of “real history,” of “the actual life-process and the activity of... individuals,” “these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever.”⁷³ Our question then: while striving for a rigorous assertoric account is necessary for successfully pointing out primal phenomena, what shape does this success ultimately take for Marx? Is it merely a matter of correction, of interrupting a one-sided concatenation of phrases with a more appropriate one? Or is it something other than an account, something other than “[phrases] opposing other phrases”?⁷⁴ Is it perhaps a matter of bringing *phrases as such* to interrupt themselves so that “German reality”⁷⁵ can finally be seen from itself in the very way it shows itself from itself?

Of course, to my proposed approach to reading Marx, one might respond skeptically: *Speculation about what Marx meant by “empiricism” is pretty far removed from concrete political engagement. How does such esoteric reflection help show that Marx still has concrete significance for us today? And, even assuming Marx still is significant, what relevance does this alleged “self-interruptive showing” have for the revolutionary struggle that is his primary focus?*

These are fair questions. We need to keep in mind, first of all, that only close, careful

engagement with what Marx actually says, coupled with scrutiny of our concrete historical material circumstances, will ever tell us precisely how and to what extent he still has concrete significance for us today; but a crucial *part* of this engagement involves anticipating and being ready to respond adequately to questions like “precisely what does Marx mean by that?”, “why should I take Marx seriously on this point?”, “what ultimately justifies what Marx is claiming here?”, etc.

To be sure, investigating what Marx means by “empiricism” has only an *indirect* bearing on concrete political struggle—but it is an important bearing none the less, one that is not at all esoteric. Whether our goal is to endorse or dismiss Marx’s work, we need to ensure we have generously interpreted and fully understood what we’re endorsing or dismissing; we need to ensure we’re not simply building up or knocking down a caricature of Marx—something that happens all too often.

In the midst of political struggle, we need to ensure that we resist becoming dogmatists, that we maintain a modicum of self-critical humility. There is no other way to unmask ideology.

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NOTES

1. Aristotle, "Metaphysics." Trans. W.D. Ross. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, vol. 2. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 980a21.
2. Plato, "Apology." Trans. G.M.A. Grube. *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997, 21d.
3. *Tēlos* 4 (1969, 3-34). Cf. the work of Karel Kosík, Paul Piccone, Bernard Waldenfels, and, more recently, Andrew Feenberg and Laurence Hemming.
4. See, for instance, Richard Wolff's and Stephen Resnick's ambiguous and philosophically thin response to this question in the closing chapter of their *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) and in their "Althusser's Liberation of Marxism" (*The Althusserian Legacy*. Eds. E. Ann Kaplan and Michael Sprinker. New York: Verso, 1993, 60-72). In the interview "Politics and Friendship" (*The Althusserian Legacy*, 183-231), Derrida laments the philosophical shortcomings of both Althusserian and "dogmatic" Marxism, where this question is concerned (e.g., 195-7, 208-9).
5. I focus here on *modern* empiricism not because I take it to be empiricism's most coherent or comprehensive iteration but because it is the primary mode to which Marx and Heidegger respond.
6. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977, 13.
7. Hume, *Enquiry*, 16.
8. Irving Copi and Carl Cohen, *Introduction to Logic*. 8th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, 93.
9. Hume, *Enquiry*, 112.
10. Hume, *Enquiry*, section XII.
11. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001, 99-100.
12. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1906, 92-6.
13. Hume, *Enquiry*, 111.
14. Hume, *Enquiry*, 108-9.
15. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*. 16th ed. Tübingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1986, 153.
16. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 27-8.
17. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 28.
18. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 34.
19. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 28-9, 33.
20. Gilbert-Walsh, "Following the Movement of a Showing: Heidegger's Ladder" (*Angelaki* 29:5 [forthcoming]).
21. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 61.
22. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 61.
23. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 68-9.
24. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §32.
25. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §33.
26. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 158.
27. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, §29; cf. §74.
28. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 153.
29. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 158.

30. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 164.
31. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 32ff.
32. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 157-8.
33. As I argue in “Following the Movement of a Showing: Heidegger’s Ladder,” the function of philosophical assertions is analogous to that of the “broken tools” discussed by Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit*, §16. More specifically, such “broken” assertions are precisely “signs”[*Zeichen*], as described in §17.
34. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 34.
35. *Ibid.*, 75. One crucial distinction to keep in view, in order to avoid confusion: a failed assertion is not simply a self-contradictory proposition: an assertion is an interpretive gesture that *points out*, that *does* something, performatively; in contrast, a proposition is the present-at-hand product of the assertoric gesture, something left in its wake.
36. E.g., Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*. Trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969, 42ff.
37. Gilbert-Walsh, “Heidegger’s Ladder.”
38. Janicaud, D., *Heidegger en France*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2001, 154.
39. See, for instance, Maurice Blanchot’s “Marx’s Three Voices.” Trans. Thomas Keenan. *New Political Science* 7:1 (1986, 17-20).
40. Karl Marx (with Friedrich Engels), *The German Ideology*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998, 571.
41. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 36.
42. Marx, *The German Ideology*.
43. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 64.
44. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 50.
45. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 65.
46. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 67-8.
47. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 36-7.
48. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 41.
49. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 45.
50. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 43.
51. E.g., Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1. 3rd German ed. Ed. Friedrich Engels. Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers, 1967, 29.
52. While sharply distinguishing Marx from the modern empiricists is certainly justified, both George Novak and Louis Althusser mistakenly oppose Marx’s dialectical materialism to *all* empiricism; and they do so without ever taking up and explicating precisely what Marx does—and doesn’t—mean by “sensation,” “empirical evidence,” etc.; moreover, neither of them adequately addresses Marx’s blunt appeals to “purely empirical” verification. See, for instance, Novak’s *Empiricism and Its Evolution: A Marxist View* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1968, 96ff.) and Althusser’s and Etienne Balibar’s *Reading Capital* (London: NLB, 1970, 35ff.).
53. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, 29.
54. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 570.
55. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 569.
56. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 37.
57. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 43.
58. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 42.
59. See, for instance, Marx’s *Grundrisse* (Trans. Martin Nicolaus. New York: Penguin Books, 1973,

- 100ff., 278). Cf. György Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* (Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) and Karel Kosík's *Dialectics of the Concrete* (Trans. Karel Kovanda and James Schmidt. Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1976), especially chapter 1.
60. Kosík, *Dialectics of the Concrete*, 18-19, 22-4.
61. Karl Popper, "The Poverty of Historicism II," *Economica* 11:43 (1944, 119-137; here 126ff.).
62. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844." Trans. Martin Milligan. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. 2nd ed. Ed. Robert C. Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978, 70.
63. Derrida, "Politics and Friendship," 221. Incidentally, Derrida was prepared to call his own work "materialism"—but only on the condition that "matter" remain an "irreducible heterogeneity," i.e., that we interrupt any account permitting it to function as a "transcendental signified" (Jacques Derrida, *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, 60, 64-5). Cf. Blanchot, "Marx's Three Voices," 19.
64. Some pretend that philosophy can simply side-step questions about ultimate foundations (e.g., Wolff's and Resnick's "nonabsolute epistemology," *Economics: Marxian versus Neoclassical*, 264ff.); however, as Kant shows, while such questions might not be answerable, neither are they philosophically avoidable (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer and Alan Wood. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, Avii.).
65. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 574.
66. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977, 11.
67. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 255.
68. Marx, *Grundrisse*, 101.
69. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 28-9, 33.
70. What I am proposing calls into question Derrida's charge that Marx is in a key respect "pre-deconstructive," i.e., that he "[wants] to ground his critique... of the spectral simulacrum on an ontology" (*Specters of Marx*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994, 170). To be sure, inasmuch as he strives to produce an account, there is a sense in which Marx—like Heidegger, like Derrida—"wants" this; but if, as I've suggested, such an account is already in Marx the *penultimate* step towards self-interruption, Marx perhaps acknowledges the "non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present" (Derrida, *Specters*, xix) more effectively than Derrida suggests.
71. E.g., G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1969, 90-91. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 13, 23, 38.
72. E.g., Marx, *Grundrisse*, 817.
73. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 43.
74. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 36.
75. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 36.