

ISSUES IN MARXIST PHILOSOPHY, Edited by John Mepham & P-H. Ruben  
(Vol. One -- Dialects and Method (Humanities Press, 1979, N.J.)

John Mepham: "From the Grundrisse to Capital: the Making of  
Marx's Method" p. 145

This is the best, i.e. most concrete article in the collection, and though he is a pragmatist and Rosdolsky is supposedly a Marxist dialectician, this is the only serious criticism of Rosdolsky and correct except for conclusion.

He starts by saying that after criticising it previously, he decided to expand it because he thought that to begin with, they had very different readings of the same book, i.e. Marx's Grundrisse, with RR approaching it "with facile pre-suppositions and their transparency." (p. 145) And that RR thinks that the way to revitalize Marx's economics because they do not understand method should be instead of turning to Capital to being with the Grundrisse, and thus understand. (rd -- he should have added that he has no understanding whatever of method).

RR's main point seems to be that "reading the Grundrisse reveals that Vol. I and II only with the analyses of 'capital in general' whereas Vol. III approaches the analysis of 'capital in concrete reality' from RR that claims that since the theories of surplus value and the Grundrisse had not been published when "the young Lenin" wrote his articles on the market he couldn't have known these great things.

JM therefore shows that, in fact, RR's emphasis on how very limited the distinction RR puts on this since it ends up simply being the difference in level of abstraction or, as he constantly emphasizes, the movement from abstract to concrete, without investigating (p. 150) "... in detail just what is involved in the procedure of scientific abstraction (as distinct for example, from speculative philosophical abstraction) nor discuss in detail the specific application of these procedures in the text of Capital itself. In fact when explaining the distinction when it is first invoked (p. 46) he confuses it with a quite different distinction, namely that between aggregate capital and individual capital."

JM contrasts RR's view to Marx's on the explanation of abstract which Marx shows to be "an abstraction which grasps the specific differences which distinguish capital from other forms of wealth ... these are the features common to each capital as such or which make up very specific sum of values into capital."

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JM then quotes Vol. I, p. 139 (new trans.)

To claim that capital in general was the object of investigation of Vol. I, JM rightly claims "has not in itself got us very far." (p. 150)

RR (p. 118) dares say that Capital suffers "abstruseness of its method of presentation." And JM then shows that reading Capital in the light of Grundrisse is based on quite unacceptable assumptions, first is that the Grundrisse and Capital are identical as far as method is concerned. (Q from p. 445) And this is a non-metaphysical but still "Hegelian inheritance of Marx's thought" (p. 492) And this is supposed to be proof of the fact that Grundrisse shows academics that you can't study Marx without having studied Hegel.

Second assumption is that Capital "constitutes a unified, homogeneous discourse; that it is methodologically and theoretically without internal fissures and contradictions so that there is a unique answer of whether or not it is in some sense methodologically Hegelian. The implication of this is, in effect, that Capital cannot be subjected to critical analysis." (p. 152) (HERE JM IS TOTALLY WRONG BY MIXING UP CRITIQUE OF RR WITH CRITIQUE OF CAPITAL. MOREOVER RR CAN SURELY NOT BE TAKEN AS THE VOICE OF MARX.)

Third assumption is that 2 discourses, one philosophical and the other economic, can be conceptually identical and differ only in their manner of presentation: in other words, that the manner of presentation is 'conceptually neutral.' (That's simply idiotic on RR's part). What RR does with this is that he takes each section of Grundrisse and identifies it with a corresponding section of Capital, and their differences are dismissed as superficial. Q RR "the distinction lies chiefly in the manner of presentation." (p. 203) In a word the development from Grundrisse to Capital is "implicitly conceived as a continuous and unilinear process." (p. 152) And RR again, even when he shows how they differ, leaves it pretty much at "traces of coquetting with the Hegelian mode of expression". In fact though the results of the analysis are the same in both texts... Grundrisse is Marx's scientific workshop and allows us to witness the process by which his economic theory develops." (p. 210).

JM calls attention to the fact that there is a difference in the two and it "may" have involved a discontinuity instead of a continuity with the earlier texts: "Many sections of the Grundrisse are clearly philosophical or speculative in character does not therefore prevent him from identifying them with 'corresponding' sections of a clearly economic character in Capital." (p. 153)

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JM then turns to RR's discussion of fetishism (pp 123-129) to which he devotes pp. 154-8. Unfortunately, it consists mostly of referring to what he worked out somewhere else and it's these references to previous, that has some interesting material so I'll cite them:

~~RR~~ Nikolai Rose, "Fetishism and Ideology" in Ideology and Consciousness No. 2, (1977). The ft. contrasts it with I.I. Rubin, where that subject is taken primarily as functioning within a critique of political economy (rd -- which is exactly what's wrong with it; however, Freddy Perlman writes a whole article in Telos on it.)

Derek Sayer, Marx's Method: Ideology, Science and Critique in Capital (Hassocks, 1979), in which it is discussed in context of Marx's materialist and realist theory of science as against Rose who analyses the different discourses "but in discussing fetishism he unfortunately does so from within a idealist problematic and is thereby led to dismiss the possibility that the concept ~~RR~~ might have useful theoretical content. ~~RR~~; this disdainfully dismisses Marx's realist epistemology as 'empiricist'."

Now then, to get back to the text, he begins by calling attention to ~~RR's~~ what RR says on the value-form "provides the proof that the 'riddle of the money fetish' is in fact 'simply the riddle of the commodity fetish, now become ~~RR~~ visible and dazzling to our eyes." (p. 126). But RR warns us "not to be misled" by the fact that this section on fetishism is in Capital and nowhere else, as "proof" which connects ~~RR~~ together an analysis of the value-form, money, and the commodity with the concept of fetishism into believing 'that Marx's famous concept of commodity-fetishism was first developed in the mid 1860s.' JM is evidently having a good time with the single and double quotes since he caught Rosdolsky in one section where there is not a word of in the Grundrisse but since RR keeps saying that it is ~~RR~~ identical he goes in for "proof" into an (1844) manuscript on Mills where JM shows there is some talk of alienation but (not) of fetishism but RR makes the two expressions one to such an extent that the following is RR's conclusion: "All the elements of the later theory of commodity are already present here (in the 1844 notes), even if they appear in philosophical guise". The 'real economic basis' of the theory was to be provided only in Capital, although 'a foundation' for it is to be found already in the Grundrisse (p. 128, emphases added).

The only thing interesting on this exposé is that he definitely catches RR not only where ~~RR~~ it can be proven there is no identity of the two books but that he ~~RR~~ himself who is trying to talk so much of method holds the view that "philosophy acts simply as the guise!"

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(p. 155) "When, older and more experienced, it mixes with the concepts of Marx's mature critique of political economy, it at last receives not only new clothes to wear but also a new name, 'fetishism', this belated baptism registering the fact that it has, one might be relieved to hear, also at last been provided with a 'foundation' and then 'a real basis' in economics." JM then shows that it is a fantastic way to prove the alleged identity since at the time Marx wrote the piece on Mill the alienation and the manifestation of it in money, far from being seen as only the result, was in fact, seen as "the cause or basic principle governing social life." And of course we know the exact opposite, not just in Capital, but in the whole mature Marx where the focus is on class struggle, so that to reverse the order of causality is itself a case of fetishism... the order of determination is inverted and in which the causal agency is misplaced onto the concrete. So the philosophical concept of alienation, far from being identical with fetishism, is rather an example of it." (p. 156)

Further, the whole concept of fetishism and the problematic which brought this about hasn't anything to with something "in general" but very specifically the effects of ~~Marx's theory~~ capitalism. JM connects this also with ~~the~~ the chapter on cooperation which 1) amazes me since I'm the only one who has made that central and 2) he is the only one who relates this to the 1844 Mss. simply because it is all "normative" rather than "epistemological". Fantastically, all the criticisms of RR are really but a pale copy of what JM means to aim at Marx: "I this, as in so many other instances, the making of Marx's Capital is possible only on condition that Hegel's methods are abandoned." !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! And because he is so opposed to Hegel, he concludes that "if there is an Hegelian inheritance in Marx, then it will be found to reside in his use of dialectical method." How peculiar that in 1980 we return back to Bernstein's removal of the dialectical scaffolding.

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Vo, One Dialectics & Method

John Mepham: FROM THE GRUNDRISSE TO CAPITAL: THE MAKING OF MARX'S METHOD

R. 1898-1967 (born in Lvov, captured by Nazi army & sent to concentration camps)

p. 149: "RR's main claim is that reading the Grundrisse reveals that the Grundrisse reveals that Vols. I & II of CAP. deal only with analysis of 'cap. in general' whereas Vol. III approaches the analysis of 'cap. in concrete reality.'"

p. 150: "RR not only considers it merely a matter of levels of abstraction BUT he confuses it with a quite different distinction, namely that bet. concrete cap. & indiv. cap."

"an abstraction which grasps the specific differences which distinguish cap. from other forms of wealth."

For Rodolski, then, CAP. suffers from the apparent abstruseness of its method of presentation. (p. 118) & leads to it being read (p. 119) as a contrived metaphysical construction.

p. 15: "His (RR's) 1st assumption is that the Grundrisse & Cap. are identical as far as method is concerned."

p. 152: "RR's 3rd assumption is that 2 discourses, one (phil.) & the other (eco), can be conceptually identical & differ only in their manner of presentation. In other words, that the manner of presentation is conceptually neutral."

p. 153: "As Marx says explicitly in the passage q by RR, value formed the basis of the alienation of pvt. prop. & money is the sensuous/obj. existence of this alienation." (p. 128) THIS/CONCEPTUALIZATION IS ENTIRELY THE INVERSE of that involved in CAP.: THE ORDER OF CAUSALITY is upside down. It constitutes FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE DISCOURSE of Cap, a case of fetishism that is a theoretical ideology in which the order of determination is inverted in which the causal agency is misplaced onto the concrete. SO THE PHIL. CONCEPT OF ALIENATION FAR FROM BEING IDENTICAL WITH THAT OF FETISHISM, IS RATHER AN EX. OF IT."

alienation is fetishism

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