Book Review Essay

Walking on Two Legs: On The Very Possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism

Andrew Feenberg, *Heidegger and Marcuse: The Catastrophe and Redemption of History*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005.

The 1960s and 70s provoked a revisiting of the relationship between phenomenology and Marxism that had surfaced before in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir around the journal *Les Temps Modernes*, Lucien Goldmann, French Heideggerian Marxism (Kostas Axelos and Michel Henry), Enzo Paci and his associates in Italy, and others. New works such as Karel Kosík's *Dialectics of the Concrete* which was associated with the Prague Spring appeared. The U.S. New Left journal *Telos* was important in this rethinking and the 1971 article "Phenomenological Marxism" by Paul Piccone set the stage for a new, anticipated synthesis. We may make a preliminary distinction in the history of this relationship between those who approach phenomenology primarily with Heidegger in mind and those for whom the main reference is Husserl. A Husserlian Marxism tends to begin from his late work on *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* and construct a synthesis with a Marxian critique of capitalist rationality. It seeks a higher rationality not superimposed upon experience but concident with the all-round, free development of human capacities. Heideggerian Marxism, in contrast, tends to begin from the phenomenology of human labour and tools in *Being and Time* in order to extend it through Marx's account of the capitalist labour process and the late Heidegger's critique of modernity as technology. Of course, from a Marxist standpoint, both the critique of capitalist rationality and the critique of labour in class society were understood as necessary and complementary elements of the critique of alienation. However, the supplementation of Marxism by phenomenology itself presupposed that the Marxist critique of capitalism had entered into crisis. Though a new synthesis was anticipated – which would walk on the two legs of phenomenology and Marxism – its current absence indicated the importance of whether it was approached from the side of rationalism or that of labour, reason or practice. The theory of alienation that Marx inherited from Hegel is thus the largest optic within which phenomenological Marxism succeeds or

fails. Marx expected that the destitution of workers under capitalism would be the impetus for its own reversal. The historical disappointment – or perhaps one should say more cautiously, the terrible delay – of this expectation led both to the supplementation of Marxism by phenomenology and the attempt thereby to re-assert the reversal of alienation by phenomenological means.

I

One of the figures often mentioned in this context, but rarely investigated in any detail, was Herbert Marcuse. His early association with Heidegger, the shift to the Frankfurt School's critical theory of society, and his later notoriety as the "guru of the New Left" made him seem a protean, if not ecclectic, figure. Many studies of Marcuse have appeared over the intevening years and several of his students have tried to carry his ideas forward, but until now no systematic study of Marcuse has addressed his role in the relationship between Heideggerian phenomenology and Marxism. Andrew Feenberg's book *Heidegger and Marcuse* does exactly that and it does it brilliantly. Moreover, it is concerned not only with the history of ideas whereby phenomenology was supplanted by critical Marxism in Marcuse's development, nor the continuing subterranean influence of phenomenology in his later work, but mainly with the philosophical question of the adequacy of a (Heideggerian) phenomenological Marxism as such, and the political question of the pertinence of such a philosophy to the conflicts and absences of our own time.

Feenberg's book uses the history of ideas as its spine, with chapters on Heidegger's accounting with Plato and Aristotle in the 1920s (when Marcuse was preparing his dissertation under Heidegger's direction), Heidegger's later development (especially the 1954/1977 essay "The Question Concerning Technology"), Marcuse's turn to Hegel in his dissertation and the later book on Hegel *Reason and Revolution*, and the influence of Georg Lukács on Marcuse. It concludes with two chapters analyzing "aesthetic redemption" and "the question concerning nature" in Marcuse's later, post-World War II, work. It is a thorough, detailed and rich history which allows Feenberg to make his philosophical and political arguments in the context of an appreciation and critique of Marcuse's work.

The most broad basis for comparison between Heidegger and Marx is their critique of modernity (also known as capitalism). The Marxism of the 1920s had discovered a problem with Marx's dialectic of subject and object that underwrites the anticipated reversal of alienation. This dialectic was intended to unite the objective critique of capitalist industry and economy with subjective revolutionary will, but history had by then shown that Marx's synthesis had, against its intentions, remained "merely theoretical." Continuing crises of the capitalist economy not only did not provoke revolutionary consciousness but

more often produced a turn to the Right against what Marxists called the "objective interests" of the working class. Marxist philosophers had to address the historical divergence of subject and object within a theoretical resolution of their relationship. It is for this that Marcuse turned to Heidegger. He thought that Heidegger's concrete phenomenology of human practice (*Dasein*) could fill the absence in Marxist theory.

Not that Marxist theory could take over Heideggerian phenomenology entirely unaltered. In order to fill out the abstract nature of Heidegger's account of *Dasein*, Marcuse interpreted it more socially in terms of class and more historically in terms of the master-slave dialectic (80–1). Even much later, Feenberg argues, a Marcusian concept such as "solidarity" can be seen as a concretion of Heidegger's concept of "authenticity" (93). Marcuse's dissertation, written under Heidegger's direction and later published as *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, aimed at this re-jigging through the concept of "life." Feenberg claims that this text must be read with an eye to its strategies and absences – a position to which anyone who has written a dissertation will have some sympathy. It doesn't mention Heidegger or *Dasein*, though the word "ontology" in the title is a clue to its inspiration and the use of the term "life" goes back to Dilthey's term that influenced Heidegger (51). The dissertation ended Marcuse's apprenticeship with Heidegger and presciently introduced Hegel to provide the missing historical and social concreteness and well as serve as a code word for Marxism (68). The dissertation thus opened the door to Marcuse's shift to the Frankfurt School and the increasing influence of Hegel, Freud, and art to express the synthesis of subject and object in a tensional and kinetic concept of "life." For Marcuse, this ended his turn to phenomenology, although, as Feenberg shows, its influence persisted in an underground fashion. *One-Dimensional Man* can be properly understood only as a Marxist response to Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology," an influence that is much more pervasive than the single reference would suggest since it supports Marcuse's key concept of a "technological a priori" (Marcuse, 1964: 153–4).

Despite his key revisions intended to bring Heidegger's phenomenology of human practice closer to a Marxist emphasis on society and class, Marcuse came to the conclusion that it was necessary to abandon the attempt to synthesize phenomenology and Marxism. This much was apparent as early as *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*. Feenberg takes considerable care to unravel the Heideggerian and Hegelian threads in this text, concerned as he is to maintain that it represents neither a straightforward abandonment of phenomenology for Hegelian Marxism (against Marcuse's self-interpretation and as Marxist accounts often claim) nor a simple maintenance of an untransformed Heideggerian *Dasein* analysis. The point of connection between these two threads is, as Lucien Goldmann (1977) has already shown, the 20th century philosophical project shared by Heidegger and Lukács to address the

crisis of European civilization through "a concrete historical ontology based on human finitude" (48) which would reveal the "ontic-ontological status of the human practice of making" (49). This project stands on two legs because "for Hegel as for Heidegger, being *appears* in producing itself" (50).

Marcuse was the lone thinker of the 1920s who thought, for a short while, that these two legs could walk together. Later attempts at a Heideggerian Marxism would need to sustain a similar position, though none of them, curiously, took their bearings from Marcuse's early work. Despite his obvious sympathy for this position, Feenberg does not rush to an easy synthesis. He clearly pinpoints the main difference. Let me quote this key passage in full.

> In Heidegger, the contingency of the relation of *Dasein* to world is never overcome. At most *Dasein*'s resoluteness enables it to be itself in the face of its 'thrownness.' Just as *Dasein* in Heidegger falls into a world, so in Hegel Spirit 'falls into otherness,' but unlike in Heidegger it 'overcomes this through "labor," and thus returns to itself. This whole process, which constitutes the Being of spirit, does not happen to spirit or take place with it; rather it is grasped and comprehended by spirit and is carried out and sustained via this cognition.' The process of revealing in Hegel is concrete, as labor and self-recognition in the object of labor. It is also social insofar as spirit is the life of a people and not just of an individual. History then is alienation and return from alienation to a mediated unity with the other. (52)

The embedded quote here is from Marcuse's *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity* (1987: 222). It shows that Marcuse's turn to Hegel – first perhaps as a supplementation but then, at least in his own view, as a substitution – was because he rejected an existentialist contingency of worldly experience in favour of the Hegelian necessity of the alienation story grounded in a Marxist ontology of labour. Feenberg shows in detail how the basic concepts of Marcuse's thought at this point represent a unique reckoning with the critical and ontological task of 20th century philosophy based on Heidegger's and Hegel's different readings of Aristotle. I can only note three related points of importance in this context: (1) Marcuse was skeptical of Hegel's absolute and read him as an atheist (58); (2) Essence is dialectically constructed as the unrealized potentiality of historical existence (59); (3) Marcuse insisted, against Hegel, that cognition be understood as life and not the reverse (64). Thus, the absolute is understood as a way of life that is "the unity in difference of subject and object" (67). It is this Hegelian synthesis, understood as a dialectic of self and otherness, a falling into alienation and return to self, that Marcuse judged capable of overcoming the historical contingency and necessary inauthenticity of Heidegger's *Dasein*. It is the notion that the productivist and practical ontology necessary to addressing the 20th century crisis can be successfully completed only if production is understood as self-production,

labour as self-making, and externality encompassed within an expanded self, such that a dialectical reversal of capitalist objectification can be expected. One might note parenthetically that it was actually Karl Löwith, Heidegger's first doctoral student, who was the first to criticize – in his *Habilitationsschrift* entitled *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen* (1928) – the key conflation of social existence with inauthentic existence in *Being and Time* such that the possibility of an authentic sociality was excluded in principle (Wolin, 1995: 4, 6). This perhaps serves to indicate that this criticism is not dependent upon a Marxist affirmation that alienation can be overcome as such.

At this point in his text Feenberg inserts a chapter focussed on Lukács to show that Marcuse's search for a concrete dialectic based on an ontology of production responded to the current crisis in Marxism. Unlike Hegel and Heidegger, who began with a productivist ontology and yet abandoned it, Marcuse's interpretation of the absolute as life aimed to solve the split between subject and object in contemporary Marxism through "a form of self-consciousness which is both the revelation of a world and the transformation of that world" (80, emphases removed). Feenberg's thesis in the next two chapters is that Marcuse's later work continues to search for such a revolutionary consciousness without a satisfactory solution. In his aesthetic theory, for which he is probably best known, "the imagination is obviously derived from the model of art but it paints not just the canvas but all of nature" (97). For Feenberg, the most promising element of Marcuse's late work is that on technology. He argues that "Marcuse's notion of an aesthetic criterion for the new technical *logos* [should] be interpreted as an attempt to articulate a substantive, future oriented conception of democracy" (109). At this point he links his own philosophy of technology to a critical interpretation of Marcuse's relation to Heidegger and a continuation of the project of a Heideggerian Marxism.

Feenberg criticizes Marcuse for conflating the scientific concept of nature with the lived experience of nature and claims that, consequently, Marcuse wrongly tied a change in the direction of technology to the utopian idea of a new scientific conception of nature. In a famous essay Jürgen Habermas (1970) criticized Marcuse in exactly the same way. Habermas' point was to assert the unsurpassable character of the objectification of nature in modern science. As a consequence, the whole of Marcuse's project of the liberation of an aesthetic sensibility was rejected and the dominant voices of the Frankfurt School turned against Marcuse for a sober procedural democracy. Dissatisfaction with such disillusioned sobriety has necessarily turned back to a re-evaluation of earlier figures such as Marcuse and Adorno. A recent re-evaluation of this crucial episode in the history of the Frankfurt School by Samir Gandesha (2004: 195, 201, 205) rightly notes the two sources of Marcuse's position, Marxism and phenomenology, and roots the effectivity of Habermas' critique in "a marginalization of the world-disclosive conception of language," indicating that a positive appreciation of Marcuse's work depends upon an appreciation

of the role of phenomenology in disclosing the lived world. Feenberg seeks to rescue Marcuse's aesthetic sensibility through a phenomenological concept of lived nature that cannot be collapsed with scientific nature. Thus, he is able to argue for the relevance of aesthetic sensibility to the philosophy of technology without incorporating Marcuse's utopian call for a new science. This also is worth quoting in full.

> Why did Marcuse follow this path? That, I think, is a consequence of the way in which he mixed a Heideggerian critique of technology with the early Marx's notion of the alienation of nature. Scientific nature becomes the object of transformative practice when reinterpreted in these terms. The result is no more plausible today than were Marx's similar conclusions in 1844. Marcuse would have avoided this outcome had he pursued the phenomenological approach at which he hints to its logical conclusion. Then he would have been able to ground his critique of technology on the lived experience of nature independent of science. (116)

As carefully as the way was prepared for this conclusion, it hit me like the last page of an Agatha Christie novel. Unlike all other Marcuse commentators (as far as I know) Feenberg argues not only for the persistence of phenomenological themes in Marcuse's later work, but that the failure to acknowledge this influence made it impossible to fulfil his chosen task. Feenberg suggests that the theme of the liberation of the senses would be better grounded in a phenomenology of the sensual character of the lived body than in Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* (125), that technology could be better understood as "the material correlate of human action" (126), that the dead-end of the call for a new science would not be necessary (126), and, most important, that his notion of an "aesthetic synthesis of experience" could be productively developed (128). This outlines an unrecognized Marcusian contribution to phenomenology in which "social critical standards would become ... available as structures of perception and action" (131). The secret is this: though the story is told forward and structured by intellectual history, the philosophical argument pushes the Marcusian project backward to reveal a missed opportunity. Feenberg's conclusion aims to do nothing less than reverse Marcuse's path from phenomenology to Marxism while at the same time radicalizing phenomenology toward a critical aesthetic of everyday life.

But was this missed opportunity a real possibility?

> Could Marcuse have developed an explicit phenomenological Marxism to explain his theory of potentialities? His early Hegel interpretation could have provided a starting point. Recall that in *Hegel's Ontology*, the structures of perception would be relative to the practical relations established in the labor process. ... A phenomenology of the aesthetic *Lebenswelt* could have been developed to explain the anticipated transcendence of affirmative culture (132).

Feenberg's answer is clear. Marcuse missed an opportunity that was a real possibility. "In Hegel Marcuse found a way of squaring the circle of modernity. . . . Dialectics now establishes the ontological priority of what Heidegger analyzed as everydayness but it does so in the more complex form of the living and working community, alienating itself and returning to itself in the course of history" (136). Despite the fact that both Marcuse and Heidegger saw Marcuse's turn to Hegel as a withdrawal from phenomenology, Feenberg tends to read such judgments in purely situational or personal terms (xiv). He must do so to maintain the current possibility of a Heideggerian Marxism that interprets the analysis of *Dasein* as accomplished through a historical dialectic of labour.

II

But can a phenomenology of the body's aesthetic relation to the world ground a dialectical relation of subject and object? If it cannot, then the reversal of alienation that is purportedly prefigured in capitalist objectification is undermined. One would return again to the unmediated duality of capitalist objectification and (absent or merely voluntarist) revolutionary will, an alienation without reversal that could not consistently be called alienation any longer – for what is alienation without return? The tripartite story – going-out-from-self, expansion of possibilities in externality, return from alienation to self at a higher level – and all the language and conceptual structure that goes with it, has to be abandoned if the return cannot be phenomenologically grounded. We may ask: is it the task of phenomenology to ground the key component of Marxism that Marxism itself could not ground? Or is the move toward phenomenology from within Marxism to require a profound revision within Marxism itself? Not just of orthodox Marxism and its abandonment of subjective revolutionary will as Paci and Piccone claimed, but of the key mediation between objectification and subjective will and desire that grounds the conceptual apparatus of alienation itself. Paci deftly showed the similarity between the part-whole relation analyzed by Husserl in *Logical Investigations* and the particular-universal status of the proletariat under capitalism, but he doesn't justify the leap to characterizing it as "alienation," thereby assuming precisely what is to be shown (1972: 326–7). Paul Piccone ends his essay, which was written under Paci's influence, with the same ungrounded assumption (1971: 31). If one doesn't take the conceptual structure of the alienation story for granted, what would one be left with?

Heideggerian Marxists have tended to hide this issue behind a Heidegger-inspired exegesis of Marx's texts. Kostas Axelos, in his account of the development of tools and machines into "technicist civilization," asserts that it has "made life and labour unbearable." The key twist is that "capitalist technicism

poisons and alienates everything, and only the negativity that is implicated in its very essence will be able to furnish the antidote that can reconcile men with a social and human civilization and technique" (Axelos, 1976: 82, 84). But a poison need not be an alienation if an alienation demands a reversal. A poison could simply kill. That there is a negativity in the essence of capitalist technicism is exactly what needs to be shown. What could manifest this adequately enough for a theory and convincingly enough for a political practice?

When Michel Henry, also mired in exegesis, claims that "the reversal of the teleology of life in economic teleology is, in its turn, reversed," he sets that claim on what seems to me an excellent understanding of Marx's critique of political economy: "the *lack of autarchy* of economic reality, the fact that, unintelligible by itself, it is always founded upon a reality of another order by which it is determined and to which it refers" (1983: 232, 270). But this is not an account of alienation and return (though perhaps the difference is obscured by his language). It is an account of the parasitical nature of economic representations and, perhaps we may say after Heidegger, of all systems of representations, on a more fundamental creative stratum of life. Henry's vision of socialism is of the "*acual becoming of social substance*, the fact that it henceforth merges with the life of men instead of being lost somewhere beyond it in the irreality of abstraction – *as if the tie that unites individuals could be separated from each one of them* [i.e. in exchange]" (1983: 298). The recovery of subjective praxis from its loss in objectified representations is thus a grasping of the fundament of human creative activity itself such that "the demand for transparency [of social relations under socialism] is nothing other than the phenomenological milieu immanent to individual life . . . the rejection of all transcendence, the refusal to allow the social relation to be constituted beyond this life . . . the assertion of the positive character of life" (Henry, 1983: 300).[1] In my view this is a brilliant Heideggerian interpretation of Marxism outside the figure of alienation through the conceptual homology of Marx's critique of political economy and Heidegger's critique of representation.

This interpretation was made possible only by the thorough investigation of the phenomenology of manifestation undertaken earlier. That investigation concludes in this way: "There exist two specific and fundamental modes in conformity with which the manifestation of what is takes place and is manifested. In the first of these modes, Being manifests itself to the outside, it makes itself unreal in the world . . . . In the second of these modes, in feeling, Being arises and reveals itself in itself, integrates itself with self and experiences self . . ." (1973: 684). One may thus read Henry's subsequent book on Marx as an overcoming of the separation of the two modes, which Marxists would call subject and object, by the primacy of the creative fundament. I do not know if Henry's terminology of modes is meant to carry the allusion to Spinoza, but it clearly has the merit of pointing to the phenomenological attempt to overcome the subject-object dualism of modern philosophy.

Hegel and Marx attempted to do this also, of course, but through dialectical synthesis rather than phenomenological reduction. Such a Heideggerian Marxism is no longer an account of alienation and return in which that which is made into object is re-appropriated by the subject at a higher level. It is a story of the parasitism of representations, of ideology as the attempt to conceal the creative fundament of representation as a factor (e.g. labour-power as labour) within systems of representations, of the "return" toward the creative fundament itself. This phenomenological return is not a Hegelian one that can capture its point of departure. It is ever-present "under" representations and can be recovered by a phenomenological dismantling (*Abbau*). This understanding of the critique of representation can also be utilized to show the parallel between ecology and the critique of political economy – between the two relations labour/labour power and wilderness/nature (Angus, 1997: 186–97). Can there, then, be a régime of the fundament, an organization (like socialism, perhaps) that can be separated from representation? To maintain so is to confuse the phenomenological turn with the Hegelian-Marxist one. Henry does not confuse them, but then his communism takes the form of a machine society producing a superabundance of goods without human intervention (1983: 306),[2] a liberation *from* labour not *of* labour. One must conclude that, because any régime requires a system of representation, and because systems of representation are parasitic on the creative fundament that produces them, there can be no régime of the creative fundament itself. This understanding grounds a conception of a limited "ideological" régime in which the ever-presence of the creative fundament is systematically obscured. While this can indeed be made to correspond to one ideal of socialism as an automated leisure society, the point in this context is that it precisely does not, and cannot, return, through a reversal, the objectification of labour to its living praxis.

The point of my excursus into Axelos and Henry is to show that Heideggerian Marxism is least successful when it understands itself as a re-instatement of the Hegelian dialectical unity of subject and object that could ground a revolutionary will within capitalist objectification. The separation between these is a historical fact that needs to be understood rather than re-instated by a theory, as if such re-instatement could be anything more than self-delusion. Rather, it is most successful when the critique revises Marxism phenomenologically and generalizes it into a critique of systems of representation. But the price of this revision is the recognition that there can be no system of the creative fundament – which Marx adumbrated as 'labour' – itself, that parasitic systems will and must persist. It would require a long, but important, disgression to suggest that the political form of 'socialism' to which such a critique corresponds has already shown signs of emergence in the new social movements of our time (Angus, 1997: 176–85, 191–2; Angus, 2000: Part III; Angus, 2001).

III

Since Feenberg's argument works chronologically as well as historically, his first chapter seeks to establish that Heidegger's reading of the Greeks allows him not only to surpass Greek metaphysics but also to show that Greek metaphysics was defined and held back by its understanding of *technē*. It is this argument that is the basis for the claim that a contemporary philosophy of technology is not only a regional inquiry required by the new social and ecological effects of technology (a common claim) but a deeply-rooted taking-over of the task of philosophy *per se* (a much more radical claim). As important a philosopher of technology as Hans Jonas was satisfied with the regional justification (1984: chapter 1), but it is this latter claim that is the basis for the contemporary relationship of Heidegger and Marxism. The philosophical question that Feenberg addresses through the relationship of Marcuse to Heidegger is the possibility that a Heideggerian Marxism – what Michel Henry (1985) has called a conception of Being as production – can assume the mantel not only of a critique of technological civilization but the definition of the task of philosophy itself.

Heidegger claims that the model of *technē* underlies the two fundamental Greek metaphysical distinctions: *physis-poiēsis* and existence-essence. The first distinction separates that which comes into being by itself from that which comes into being through human activity. *Technai* are the forms of practical knowledge in human making. Thus, one may suppose that it is the experience of knowledge in human activity that grounds the distinction between such forms and those which operate without a prior idea in the mind of the human actor. Marx utilized this Greek conception, which he took from Aristotle, when he pointed out that "what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality" (1970: 178). This prior idea that grounds the construction of useful things is the essence that activity brings into existence. It is thus not too difficult to see that *technē* underlies the existence-essence distinction in the case of objects of *poiēsis*. The more important, and distinctively Heideggerian, claim is that *technē* also underlies the existence-essence distinction in the case of objects of *physis*, or nature (as one would say in Latin).

Plato applied the existence-essence distinction to *physis* as well as *poiēsis* by claiming that the static world of ideas is distinct from and gives the measure to the kinetic world of experience. The Platonic theory of ideas, which Heidegger later called metaphysics, should be understood as the establishment of the model of *technē* for subsequent Greek philosophy and, indeed, philosophy outright insofar as it depends on these two fundamental distinctions. If it is *technē* that holds together the distinctions that ground an understanding of *kinesis*, movement, then it reigns through all subsequent theory of being and time. Feenberg summarizes:

What conclusion do we draw from these historical considerations on anceint Greek philosophy? I will be provocative and say that the philosophy of technology begins with the Greeks and is in fact the foundation of all Western philosophy. After all, the Greeks interpret being as such through the concept of technical making. This is ironic. Technology has a low status in high culture but it was actually there at the origin of that culture and, if we believe the Greeks, contains the key to the understanding of being as a whole. (8)

This is not the only irony. Feenberg's wording obscures a key point here. It was not the Greek understanding itself that *technē* was the model for philosophy. This is the Heideggerian interpretation of the Greek understanding. Greek philosophy itself, as Feenberg himself documents, *denied* a distinction between that which is true of that which produces itself and that which is true of that which is produced by humans (8). It is this denial which allows Socrates to argue against Callicles (and, in general, the instrumentalism of the rhetoricians) that human action has an essence *just like non-human things*. *Technē* became the model for Greek philosophy precisely insofar as it was not understood to be drawn from human action but, instead, as applicable to being as such. Greek philosophy battled the conventionalism of the rhetoricians (*nomos*) with distinctions that were themselves universalized from the model of human action (*logos*). In taking over this Heideggerian understanding of the nature of Greek philosophy since the theory of ideas, Feenberg must commit himself to the coincident Heideggerian notion that such philosophy involves a forgetting of the prior origins of philosophy – his version of the Marxian and Nietzschean claim that philosophy does not know itself. Feenberg does not appear to be aware of this, however, as indicated by his puzzlement as to why Heidegger would refer to *physis* as a form of *poiēsis* even though it isn't in his Greek grammar (141, footnote 5). To this extent, the notion of being as production cannot be regarded as an original formation of philosophy.

One should also underline that the Heideggerian reading of Greek philosophy is by no means self-evident. The work of Hannah Arendt, for example, took off from precisely the same point but argued that the collapse of *technē* and *phronēsis*, art and politics, in Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle "channels what according to Aristotle pertains to the ethical realm and is connected with the plurality of human affairs into a debate strictly dealing with ontology." The root of this misinterpretation was that "the pollution of *sophia* by *poiēsis* and *technē* explains that the Greek ontologist grants more attention to the being of nature than to his own being. The reason is that Being in the sense of the subsisting presence of nature is that which the activity of production never ceases presupposing and taking for granted" (Taminiaux, 1997: 6, 8). This Arendtian critique of Heidegger underlies all attempts (Gadamer, Habermas, etc.) to separate a realm of *praxis* from *technē* and assert the political steering of contemporary technology. It is not only consistent but reinforcing to say

both that Heidegger collapsed Aristotle's *praxis* into *technē*, and that *technē* was the model for revealing. But if one wishes, as did Arendt, to rescue an Aristotelian concept of politics as *praxis* to counterpose to *technē*, then it must be shown, against Heidegger's challenge, how the concept of *praxis* is not indebted to *technē* in its fundamental conception. Feenberg's account of Marcuse's path seems the stronger option here. It is, at any rate, the more Heideggerian.[3]

The understanding of post-Platonic Greek philosophy as governed by the model of *technē* allows a clarification of the specific character of modern philosophy. Whereas the Greeks did not question the origin of essences, modern historicism has revealed the ungrounded character of the *eidos*. Thus, moderns tend to read Callicles with more sympathy than Socrates (11, 41) and, one might say more generally, modernity is a universalization of the instrumentalism of Greek rhetoric in a new partnership with *technē*. "The modern technological revealing sweeps away all concepts of essence and leaves only a collection of fungible stuff available for human ordering in arbitrary patterns" (39) because "we have discovered the active involvement of human beings in the meaning of beings even if we express this insight in a distorted form as subjectivism and nihilism" (39). Here is the claim to 'distortion' again – a concept to which any appropriation of the Marxist legacy must give some meaning. Perhaps it is the very fact that, while modern historicism has *discovered* the activity of humans in the question of essence, the *fact* of this involvement has been there since Greek philosophy. Most modern thinkers have confused these two elements, whereas Heidegger's analysis of Greek philosophy as *technē* allows them to be distinguished. It is likely this confusion which leads to the subjectivism and nihilism which Feenberg rightly diagnoses.

There is another characteristic of modern technology that Feenberg passes over in silence, but which is essential for connecting Marx's critique of political economy to the Heideggerian critique of representation: its systematicity. It is precisely the overcoming of essence by fungible stuff, *technē* by *Gestell*, that knits the various productive activities into a whole. This whole is not the aggregate of a number of similar activities considered together, but an integral whole of activities that mutually refer to each other and function in relation to each other: a system. The idea of a system is an essentially modern idea (Heidegger, 1985: 29ff.). In Henry's words, "if we consider the unconcealment proper to modern technology as it is described by Heidegger, we notice that it is one and accomplishes itself globally: within this unconcealment, the fate of the activity of the one who works is identical to that of the raw materials, of form and of its end. The essence of technology is like a structure: the elements co-constituting it receive their intelligibility and their definition from that structure" (1985: 9).

As Heidegger said, modern technology also contains the other possibility "that [man] might experience as his essence his needed belonging to

revealing" (quoted, 40). This would be the Heideggerian version of the re-versal that Hegelians call negativity and which grounds their application of the form of the alienation story to history. But note that while a "belonging to revealing" is, in a certain sense, the corresponding negativity of the "forgetting of Being" in technological civilization, it does not promise a reversal whereby the structures of technological civilization become de-alienated or "authentic" (*Eigentlich*). What possibility does it open? This is a crucial, but less-explored issue. One reason that it is less-explored is that Heideggerian Marxists have been too quick to confuse this Heideggerian "negativity" of open-ness with a Hegelian one and to opt for the supposed dialectical solution. As I have docu-mented above, Feenberg is by contrast clear about the difference between the Heideggerian and Hegelian forms of appearing in production.

A contemporary philosophy of technology thus contains the related possi-bilities of a critique of technological civilization and a renewal of philosophy, but one which is more of an open field than the expectation of determinate negation. There may be a Heideggerian Marxism, but only if it rids itself of the inherited Hegelianism of dialectical Marxism and confronts the phenomenon of appearing anew.

IV

How stands it, then, with Feenberg's central claim that a re-evaluation of the Heideggerian-phenomenological element of Marcuse's thinking can ground a contemporary philosophy of technology? Feenberg's argument that Marcuse turned to Hegel to ground a notion of revolutionary reversal that couldn't be grounded from a Heideggerian position is compelling. His tracing of lingering phenomenological themes and conceptualizations in Marcuse is conceptually deft and interpretively convincing. But the argument, precisely in bringing back the phenomenological component, tends to leave unresolved, not really even addressed, the underlying issue of the relation between the Hegelian theory of alienation and the phenomenological kinaesthetic of the lived body (Landgrebe, 1981). We have the two legs, but can't be sure if the creature can walk.

From this point of view, the intellectual history that Feenberg carefully traces might fall victim to the philosophical problem that drives it forward. Al-though Marcuse might well have underestimated the phenomenological traces in his later work, he might have been right on the basic point that his adher-ence to a Hegelian version of negation requires departure from Heidegger and phenomenology. To stand the question on the other leg: Does the philosophy of technology that can be grounded by bringing back phenomenological ki-naesthesis allow one to spot an incipient revolutionary will and ground an expectation of reversal? "Catastrophe and redemption" reads the sub-title to the text. Should it be catastrophe *or* redemption? Poison without antidote?

There are two possible philosophical options here and a divide in the political road: either one wants to heal Marxism by rediscovering Hegelian negation within the Heideggerian critique of metaphysics (redemption) or one recognizes that phenomenological kinaesthesis grounds neither Hegelian negation nor revolutionary will (catastrophe). Despite the brilliance of Feenberg's intellectual history and philosophical analysis, I think that he muddies this alternative. The basis for the two legs, he rightly points out, is that "for Hegel as for Heidegger, being *appears* in producing itself" (50). But, for Hegel, the negativity in appearing is manifested as an opposition that grounds a synthesis, whereas, for Heidegger, negativity is a withdrawal, a concealment within unconcealment, that haunts all manifestation as such. Heideggerian negativity never becomes a second positive and can't be enfolded within a continuous dialectical movement.

The political divide is between those who seek to find a revolutionary unity to the plurality of critical social movements of our time and those for whom this plurality in an unsurpassable historical event.[4] The most honest form of the first alternative is Marcuse's post-Heideggerian path. Feenberg shows that until the late 1960s it takes the form of a Hegelian-Marxist concept of potentiality where "potentialities emerge from history and are not bound by the given form of things" (20). Its philosophical ground is in a historical and dialectical concept of essence "culminating in the concept of the essence of man, which sustains all critical and polemical distinctions between essence and appearance as their guiding principle and model" (Marcuse, 1968: 86). Later, under the influence of the New Left, he argued for a "new sensibility" in which the values of life would prevail (20). In all its shifts it attempted to link emergent social movements to a revolutionary subjectivity. I would judge this a genuine tragedy, an honest and questing revolutionary sensibility ultimately held back from confronting the *novum* of its time by a presupposed Hegelian negativity, an episode in the historical tragedy of Marxism itself. Acceptance of the plurality of critical social movements might ground a new politics: not Heidegger's but perhaps Heideggerian. Feenberg doesn't address this question in this book, but in another seems to accept the Marxist critique of new social movements that demands a "class politics" even while he admits that the labour movement doesn't totalize all social struggles (2002: 62). One of the crucial issues for a politics of anti-hegemonic coalition is what sense of universality it might contain instead of "class politics" and, in more practical terms, whether an anti-hegemonic alliance might emerge from it. I cannot go into this question here, but I am sure that, if such an alliance should emerge, Marcuse's ghost will march with it, whereas Hegel's will wait at home with the negativity.

The philosophical options: To what extent does Feenberg's philosophy of technology expect a Hegelian return from alienation? To what extent does it seek the creative fundament uncovered by the critique of representations?

There are two Marcusian threads that Feenberg wants to pull on here: life and democracy. He argues that the value of "life" in the Marcusian sense is designed into the technical codes by which a society structures itself around a technology. "Each such code affirms life within the limits of the technical knowledge and the repressive structure of the dominant regime. Ethical and aesthetic mediations play an essential role in this process, integrating technical principles to a design that coheres with social and natural values" (105). In short, he uncovers the Marcusian historical essence of life (*Dasein*) within the social organization of each technology, not (only) within the capitalist social order as a whole. This philosophical analysis grounds both academic studies of, and political interventions in, specific technologies with values inherent in their design and application. If this possibility were sufficiently developed to disturb the "background consensus that everywhere trumps tradition" (108) based on technology it would unleash a "substantive, future oriented conception of democracy" (109). Thus, while "there are problems with Marcuse's approach, . . . at least it offers a properly modern solution to the conundrum of rights and goods while promising a path to the realization of more liberating projects than those of either tradition or business" (110). These proposals constitute a valid extension of Marcuse's work in the direction of a philosophy of technology, but they are largely silent on the philosophical divide that I have argued must be addressed by any attempt to revive a Heideggerian Marxism. In this context, one might try to make something of Feenberg's insistent and consistent rejection of any return to tradition or pre-modern technologies, which he interprets as "nostalgia for a pure immediacy of the phenomenological sort" (1995: 223), or his acceptance of what Stephen Galt Crowell (2001: 131, 182) has called the "received view" of the relation between Husserl and Heidegger as a shift from consciousness to experience which prevents him from bringing the Husserlian critique of modern rationality into relation with Marxism. But the hints are too fleeting to be conclusive.

For a contemporary philosophy of technology to fulfil the expectation of a critique of technological civilization and a reformation of the task of philosophy itself, it must address two issues that inevitably come with an appropriation of the Heideggerian critique of technology. The first is the notion that the later Greek metaphysics of presence involves a forgetting of the prior origins of philosophy. The second is whether there are limits to a productivist philosophy itself – a question posed equally by the strand in contemporary environmental philosophy which asserts that all beings have an intrinsic worth apart from their instrumental value to humans and by Heidegger's later conception of thinking as releasement (*Gelassenheit*). One wonders whether a Husserlian Marxism might shed some light on these issues through its critique of one-sided rationalism.

Feenberg's book doesn't address these questions, in large part because of the failure to ask directly whether the two legs of Marcusian Heideggerian

Marxism can effectively walk together. I have suggested that they can't, that either Hegel or Heidegger has to go. To this extent, the philosophical task of the book is obscured by the organizing spine of intellectual history. I think that Feenberg is exactly right about Marcuse's latent Heideggerianism, but that Marcuse is right that his move to Hegel had to jettison not only Heidegger but phenomenology outright. Feenberg's philosophy of technology should be watched with great interest as it takes on the huge task of a critique of technological civilization and a reformation of the task of philosophy itself in the manner of Marcuse and Heidegger. This truly stellar book, which has the great merit of bringing the project of phenomenoloigcal Marxism to life again in our own philosophical context, remains as yet unclear on whether its hopes are Heideggerian or Hegelian, on which way the "revealing" will go.

Notes

1. Jacques Derrida has pointed out that philosophies of life must "weigh carefully" whether they understand that "the specter weighs, it thinks, it intensifies and condenses itself within the very inside of life, within the most living life, the most singular (or, if one prefers, individual) life" with specific reference to Michel Henry (Derrida, 1994: 109). When Karl Marx claimed that "labour is the living, form-giving fire ... the transitoriness of things, as their formation by living time" he seems to have assumed, rather than shown, that the present as "living time" could throw off the weight of the "dead past" (Marx, 1973: 361). But can life manifest itself, if manifesting is to humans, without death? And if not, human society must make a place for death, as it always has, and the free society can be free from neither death nor the past. And, again, how could such a burden be understood through the figure of alienation?

2. While this is Henry's logic, I do not agree that any ideal of socialism must require an end to creative praxis. Rather, it implies the possibility of appealing outside the system of representation to the creative fundament – which would be a political act of *Abbau*, dismantling, deconstruction – without expecting that this appeal could itself become systemic. This would require new forms of democracy and political discourse.

3. It is interesting to point out that while both Marcuse's and Arendt's interpretations of Greek philosophy focus on *technē*, due to Heidegger's influence, Adorno's interpretation focusses critically on the identity of thought and being in Greek philosophy. This interpretation obviously parallels that of Marx's critique of Hegel. In contrast to the Heideggerian critique, Adorno sees the account of *kinesis* in Aristotle as promising because "where matter and form touch movement must always and necessarily arise" (2001: 99–100, 84). Even if this touch is not sufficient to bring matter into philosophy and unsettle the identity of thought and being, it does represent the most advanced point of Greek metaphysics for Adorno because it is the source for the concept of mediation.

4. One might argue that I've set the bar too high, that the emergence of a revolutionary reversal can't be shown theoretically. For myself, I have once expected enough from Marxism to demand an account of the point from which its own specificity derives. If it doesn't work, if theory and praxis do not become a world-revolutionizing unity, surely it's better to go elsewhere. But beyond myself, it's not a question of predicting the future, but of showing the

revolutionizing moment itself at work in the present. If such a moment is not manifested as such, then Marxism deflates into carping that the age of freedom and equality hasn't arrived. One does not need much theory to see this.

References

Adorno, T. (2001). *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*. Trans. E. Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Angus, I. (1997). *A Border Within: National Identity, Cultural Plurality and Wilderness*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press.

Angus, I. (2001). *Emergent Publics: An Essay on Social Movements and Democracy*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring.

Angus, I. (2000). *Primal Scenes of Communication: Communication, Consumerism, Social Movements*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Axelos, K. (1976). *Alienation, Praxis, and Techne in the Thought of Karl Marx*. Trans. R. Bruzina. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Crowell, S. G. (2001). *Husserl, Heidegger and the Space of Meaning.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx*. Trans. P. Kamuf. New York: Routledge.

Feenberg, A. (1995). *Alternative Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Feenberg, A. (2002). *Transforming Technology: A Critical Theory Revisited*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gandesha, S. (2004). Marcuse, Habermas, and the Critique of Technology. In *Herbert Marcuse: A Critical Reader.* Eds. J. Abromeit and W. M. Cobb. New York: Routledge.

Goldmann, L. (1977). *Lukács and Heidegger: Towards a New Philosophy*. Trans. W. Q. Boelhower. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Habermas, J. (1970). Technology and Science as "Ideology." In *Toward a Rational Society*. Trans. J. J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press.

Heidegger, M. (1954/1977). The Question Concerning Technology. In *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*. Ed. and Trans. D. F. Krell. New York: Harper and Row.

Heidegger, M. (1985). *Schelling's Treatise on the Nature of Human Freedom*. Trans. J. Stambaugh. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Henry, M. (1973). *The Essence of Manifestation*. Trans. G. Etzkorn. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Henry, M. (1983). *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality.* Trans. K. McLaughlin. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Henry, M. (1985). The Concept of Being as Production. *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 10.

Husserl, E. (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Trans. D. Carr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Jonas, H. (1984). *The Imperative of Responsibility*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kosík, K. (1976). *Dialectics of the Concrete: A Study on the Problems of Man and World*. Trans. K. Kovanda and J. Schmidt. Boston: D. Reidel.

Landgrebe, L. (1981). *The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl*. Ed. D. Welton. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Löwith, K. (1928). *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen*. München: Drei Masken Verlag.

Marcuse, H. (1954). *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. New York: Humanities Press.

Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (1968). The Concept of Essence. *Negations*. Trans. J. J. Shapiro. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, H. (1987). *Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*. Trans. S. Benhabib. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Marx, K. (1970). *Capital, Volume. 1*. Trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Marx, K. (1973). *Grundrisse: Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*. Trans. M. Nicolaus. Middlesex: Penguin.

Paci, E. (1972). *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*. Trans. P. Piccone and J. Hanson. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Piccone, P. (1971). Phenomenological Marxism. *Telos* 9.

Taminiaux, J. (1997). *The Thracian Maid and the Professional Thinker: Arendt and Heidegger*. Trans. M. Gendre. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Wolin, R. (1995). Karl Löwith and Martin Heidegger – Contexts and Controversies: An Introduction. In *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism.* Karl Löwith. Trans. G. Steiner. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ian Angus
Department of Humanities
Simon Fraser University
Website: www.ianangus.ca