

Marx's Social Ontology, by Carol G. Gould (MIT Press, 1978)

Of all the stupid books that make claim to being original, and totally express something new that no one else has seen, Carol Gould's is tops in stupidity. (Incidentally, even in trying to attribute an ontology to Marx, she certainly had no right to claim that she alone did it, in view of the fact that no-one less than Lukacs spent something like $\frac{1}{4}$ of a century to prove that Marx has something called "Social Ontology"; he never did finish, but what he did was both more massive, not to mention profound and serious than what she did. And even he had to fall in the abyss of socially-necessary labor time, as if it were a description of socialism rather than capitalism! She does him one better by just speaking of time without any hint whatsoever that she knows the historic meaning of it beyond Heidegger).

As if all that does not sum up sufficient mistakes this really shows that far from considering the totality of Marx, what it does try (try, not succeed) to base itself on is the Grundrisse and that not in its totality, but whenever she finds she could drag out to "prove" a point, evidently based on the fact that there was a small study group that met in NYC in ~~1974~~ (1974) to study the newly published Grundrisse in English.

She supposedly "raises up" Marx to the status of Aristotle, and all due to the question of individuality, lowered to the economic man: (Grundrisse p. 87) "All production is appropriation of nature on the part of an individual within and through a specific form of society."

And whereas this chapter (pp 1-39) ~~is~~ (pp 40-68) "The Ontology of Labor: Objectification, Technology and the Dialectic of Time", not only has nothing to say about time, the very specifically socially necessary labor time Marx is always talking about as opposed to Marx's concept of "time is the place for human development", Gould says that Marx's subject "bears some resemblance to Heidegger's conception of time in Being and Time. For Heidegger, too, time originates in the being of Dasein, a being characterized by activity" which is exactly like saying counter-revolution bears a resemblance to revolution! (p. 61)

At least here she admits that Marx said nothing like that and it wasn't due to the fact that they lived in 2 different periods, but, "the foregoing elaboration of a theory of time suggested in the Grundrisse goes beyond what Marx explicitly says." And by being she obviously means she reconstructed Marx so profoundly that instead of being only "implicit" she has truly made it explicit.

The 3rd chapter, "Toward a Labor Theory of Cause: Action and Creation in Marx's Social Ontology" (pp 69 to 100) repeats her favorite word, "reconstruction" and in this case her reconstruction "of what I am calling Marx's theory of cause" as an ontological theory has no less than 3 parts: objectification, internal relations, and, (third) a discussion of how, according to Marx, the ontological reality of labor as cause gives rise to the appearance of cause and effect, as an external and reified relation in a given historical period, namely that of capitalism. Marx's theory of alienation will be important here." (p. 71)

As if all this wasn't ^{not} enough, wait til you get to Ch. 4 on freedom and Ch. 5, the last, on Justice. The 4th is "The Ontology of Freedom: Domination Abstract, Freedom and the Emergence of the Social Individual." It would be impossible to consider that that magnificent quotation on "absolute movement of becoming" (my translation to P&R, p. 488 in the Grundrisse) could possibly be misunderstood. But she manages to make freedom so dead and abstract that you see not a single struggle but a lot of "organization": "In the Grundrisse Marx sees freedom as developing historically through different stages of social organization." (I might say that she does as badly by Hegel as she does by Marx and especially so on the famous master-slave dialectic in the Phenomenology.)

The final chapter, on Justice, is really too idiotic to even try to summarize especially when you consider that the very first statement of Marx, whether you take his statement on the peasants who "stole" the wood and all through the Com. Man., not to mention the many times when he is trying to convince the League of the Just to become the Communist League, when the brunt of his whole attack is against what capitalists call Justice, and how abstract it is and workers must not get mixed up with that word, you are by now at wit's end.