

Den "Gestus" verstehen: Fünf Thesen zu Brechts Realismuskonzeption

Die folgenden Thesen beabsichtigen eine kritische Rekonstruktion der Realismuskonzeption Bertolt Brechts. Dabei zielen sie insbesondere darauf ab, Brechts noch immer nur unpräzise verstandenen Begriff des "Gestus" zu klären. Der Begriff setzt die von Marx behauptete "Einheit von Theorie und Praxis" voraus, welche Brecht als das Fundament seines Werks betrachtete. Durch die Lektüre zentraler Aussagen Brechts zum Naturalismus, zum "chinesischen Theater," zur "Straßenszene" und zum "Gestus" selbst zeige ich, dass eine Klärung des Begriffs möglich wird, wenn Brechts Realismuskonzeption konsequent als eine epistemische verstanden wird, in welcher sich der Realismusgrad einer theatralen Darstellung nach ihrer Fähigkeit bemisst, zur Erkenntnis gesellschaftlicher Tatsachen beizutragen. Im Sinne einer solchen Analyse lässt sich nachvollziehen, in welcher Beziehung Brechts Theaterpraxis seiner eigenen Auffassung nach zur Praxis des revolutionären Marxismus stand.

These interlocking theses critically reconstruct Bertolt Brecht's conception of realism, with the goal of clarifying his concept of the "Gestus." The notion of the "Gestus" is often characterized in hazy and imprecise terms. I argue that it is premised upon Marx's conception of the "unity of theory and praxis," which Brecht believed to underpin his work as a whole. Analyzing Brecht's theoretical writings on Naturalism, "Chinese Theatre," the "Street Scene" and the "Gestus" itself, I argue that an adequate understanding of Brecht's conception of realism—one that I call epistemic realism, and in which the criterion for the accuracy of any theatrical representation is its capacity to give rise to knowledge of social facts—may well resolve the difficulty presented by Brecht's "Gestus," and in this manner illuminate the relation Brecht believed to obtain between his theatrical practice and the praxis of revolutionary Marxism.

Towards an Understanding of “Gestus”: Five Theses on Brecht’s Conception of Realism

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I: Brecht, Naturalism, and “Chinese Theater”

Marx’s theory of history and society gave Brecht’s theatrical method its primary end—changing the function of the existing institutional structures within which theater was produced and received, in such a way that they would contribute to the struggle of the historically ascending class. At the same time, Marx’s theory supplied the method’s ultimate criterion of success. For this reason, the theory also grounds the criteria and standards for assessing individual theatrical representations. Brecht saw that, for reasons intrinsic to Marx’s theory, these criteria and standards had to be conceived as criteria and standards for the representations’ *accuracy* or *realism*.¹ He also saw that the accuracy or realism of any given theatrical representation had to be conceived as a matter of its *epistemic* potential: A representation is realistic to the extent that it assists the individuals who produce and receive it in their attempts to gain knowledge about the world around them and their place within it. The theater was supposed to serve its primary and concretely social or political purpose—the revolutionary transformation of economic relations—*by means of* this epistemic potential. An accurate account of the shape of Brecht’s method should insist on the analytical distinction between these two levels, particularly since maintaining this distinction is necessary to open up the possibility of using parts of Brecht’s method for purposes other than his own, as many important post-Brechtian playwrights and theater practitioners have done.

To understand Brecht’s conception of epistemic realism, and the manner in and extent to which it depends on Marx’s theory of history, one must first turn to the historical form of theatrical representation that was the principal target of his criticism: Naturalism.

According to Brecht’s characterization, nineteenth- and twentieth-century theatrical Naturalism was based on the idea that theater practitioners should strive for the greatest possible degree of perceptual similarity between theatrical representations and the kind of real-life situations they are to represent. As Brecht’s “philosopher” in the “Messingkauf” dialogues puts it, the “copies of the elements” that make up the “location” or “setting” of such a situation have to be “optically accurate (and also acoustically accurate) and complete.”² With reference to the early Stanislavski, Brecht writes: “Das Verhalten der Schauspieler auf der Bühne soll sich in nichts, nicht im kleinsten Detail, von dem Verhalten der Menschen im wirklichen Leben unterscheiden.”³ The theatrical actor’s action should look and sound as similar as possible to what the represented action would look and sound like, if performed by an actual person of the relevant kind. The idea is clearest in the rare case in which an actor’s action represents a particular action that some individual actually performed at some point in the past. In this

Gestus-Musik-Text/Gestus-Music-Text

Friedemann Weidauer, ed., *The Brecht Yearbook / Das Brecht-Jahrbuch*
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case, Naturalism would demand that the performer's action have a maximal degree of perceptual similarity to that actual action (at least with regard to the features that are known to the participants in the theatrical event). In the vastly more common case in which the represented action is not a particular action, but one that satisfies a certain set of descriptions (such as "shooting a nineteenth-century French businessman"), the set of descriptions that is satisfied by the actor's action has to be consistent with what is known about the possible looks and sounds of the features that are mentioned in or implied by the original set of descriptions (which is usually given in and through the text of a drama).

The Naturalistic criterion of representational accuracy holds particular theoretical interest since it can be seen as an extreme version of the more localized demands for perceptual similarity that can be found in many historical forms and styles of theater. Nevertheless, Naturalism is only one of countless historical and possible forms of theater, and can claim no privileged relation to the concept of theatrical representation as such. One of the conventions that define theatrical Naturalism enjoins the audience to treat all (or nearly all) perceptible features of the actors' movements and their immediate environment as having *representational relevance*. Many non-naturalistic forms and styles of theater include conventions that *restrict* the range of features that the participants in the theatrical event are entitled to regard as having a bearing on what they are to take any given movement to represent. Brecht describes a form of theater that does so when writing about a performance by Méi Lánfāng's company that he witnessed in Moscow in May 1935:

Man weiß, daß das chinesische Theater eine Menge von Symbolen verwendet. Ein General trägt auf der Schulter etwa kleine Fähnchen, und zwar so viele, als er Regimente befehligt. Armut wird dadurch angedeutet, daß auf den seidenen Gewändern unregelmäßige Stücke von anderer Farbe, aber ebenfalls aus Seide, aufgenäht sind, die Flicker bedeuten. Die Charaktere werden durch bestimmte Masken bezeichnet, also einfach durch Bemalung. Gewisse Gesten mit beiden Händen stellen das gewaltsame Öffnen einer Tür vor usw.⁴

According to Brecht's description, "the Chinese theater" not only places limits on which features of a given actual movement by the performer are representationally relevant, but also imposes constraints on what kinds of movement these relevant features can be taken to represent. Determinate conventions stipulate that every actual movement that is of some specific kind has to be taken by all participants in the theatrical event to represent a movement of some specific kind. Some such conventions stipulate that any performer's movement that has a certain feature *f* must represent a movement that has a certain other feature, *g*. An example of such a convention in the case of "Chinese theater" is the patched silk costume. Here, the com-

petent theatrical spectator must disregard the features with regard to which the costumes do not resemble the clothes that a poor person might typically wear—the fact that they are made of silk, for example—as representationally irrelevant. The costume functions as an iconic sign: it is both necessary and sufficient to indicate the poverty of a character, regardless of its actual similarity to what poor people might wear.

Brecht's description of "Chinese theater" underlines the historical and cultural peculiarity of the Naturalistic ideal, as well as its cost. It shows that, by limiting its elements through the establishment of criteria of representational relevance and by assigning determinate meanings to these elements, theatrical representation could achieve a degree of representational clarity and economy that was out of the Naturalistic theater's reach. This representational economy—the paucity and simplicity of the means necessary to achieve a particular representational end—could translate into concretely material and financial economy.⁵ If one had to choose a prop to represent a chair in representing a situation in a seventeenth-century Paduan palace, for example, the object used could bear a greater or lesser likeness to a chair as one might actually have found it in such a situation. Where the Naturalistic criterion of representational accuracy would point to using an original chair from the period or an exact replica of such a chair, other forms of theater may allow or even mandate the use of a simple cardboard box.

Critically important for the development of Brecht's own theatrical method is the insight that, whether one uses the original chair or the box, it will take an act of *interpretation* on the part of the audience for the object in question to be understood as a representation of a chair in a seventeenth-century Paduan palace. The Naturalistic ideal thus veils the theater's potential for representational economy by obscuring the fact that perceptual similarity or resemblance, no matter of what degree or completeness, is never a *sufficient* condition of representation. Moreover, a high degree of perceptual similarity is seldom, if ever, *necessary* to enable the spectators to make the interpretive leap of understanding one object to represent another. The theater can rely in this regard on the more general human capacity in which it is rooted: "Vieles können wir der Phantasie überlassen. Für ein Kind ist ein Holzschicht, mit einem Lumpen umwickelt, der schönste Säugling. Sein Holzschicht im Arm, genießt es alle Muttergefühle."⁶

II: Epistemic Realism

Brecht's short essay "Die Straßenszene: Grundmodell einer Szene des epischen Theaters" contains what is perhaps the clearest outline of the foundations of his conception of representational realism or accuracy.⁷ According to the conception, a representation's realism resides in its epistemic potential. If a representation is realistic about something to the extent that it allows or helps the spectator to arrive at knowledge about that thing, then any assessment of a given representation's realism must be relative to a specific *epistemic interest*.⁸ Furthermore, it is a central premise of Brecht's conception of realism that all theatrical representations are shaped by the "views,"

"intentions," and evaluative assumptions of those who make them (whether these producers are conscious of this fact or not), and that all such "views" and "intentions" include certain epistemic interests and exclude other such interests.⁹ If a group of individuals intends to produce a realistic theatrical representation, it therefore has to define as clearly as possible the epistemic interests it is pursuing. In order to allow its *audience* to assess the degree of realism of the resulting representation, moreover, the group has to render the epistemic interests it is pursuing as *explicit* as possible to this audience in that representation. The representers' epistemic interests codetermine and constrain not only what situations or happenings are chosen for representation but also what *features*, aspects or elements of these situations or happenings are represented. Brecht's "Straßenszene" shows that this is the case even when a representation represents a particular event that happened in the recent past and whose duration and location is clearly delimited.

In order to demonstrate *how* epistemic interests codetermine and constrain representations, Brecht imagines a representation whose exclusive and explicit purpose or end is to satisfy a clearly defined epistemic interest:

[D]er Augenzeuge eines Verkehrsunfalls demonstriert einer Menschenansammlung, wie das Unglück passierte. Die Umstehenden können den Vorgang nicht gesehen haben oder nur nicht seiner Meinung sein, ihn "anders sehen"—die Hauptsache ist, daß der Demonstrierende das Verhalten des Fahrers oder des Überfahrenen oder beider in einer solchen Weise vormacht, daß die Umstehenden sich über den Unfall ein Urteil bilden können.¹⁰

The point of the witness's representation or "demonstration" is to help explain a particular event—the car accident—and, more specifically, a particular condition that resulted from the event—the pedestrian's injury.¹¹ The witness's epistemic interest is hence simply to answer the question: What events and conditions contributed to bringing about the injury? If his epistemic interest is motivated in turn by the desire to come to an assignment of causal responsibility for the injury, he will be particularly interested in answering the narrower question: What actions or involuntary movements contributed to bringing about the injury? The epistemic interest whose satisfaction is the primary purpose of the representation may in turn serve a practical interest that has a broader role in individual or social life,¹² such as the assignment of ethical or legal responsibility for the accident or injury.¹³ Whether it is motivated by any further (practical) purposes or not, the witness's epistemic interest will guide what features or aspects of the chain of events that preceded or attended the pedestrian's injury he should aim to represent. In order to give the clearest possible answer to the question he wishes to answer, the witness or "demonstrator" should limit himself to representing *only those* features or aspects that may have played a part in the injury's causation. The representation's primary purpose thus sets

up criteria of representational relevance: "Der Zweck seiner Demonstration bestimmt, welchen Vollständigkeitsgrad er seiner Nachahmung verleiht. Unser Demonstrant braucht nicht alles, sondern nur einiges von dem Verhalten seiner Personen zu imitieren, ebensoviel, daß man ein Bild bekommen kann."¹⁴

Brecht's demonstrator or actor, in other words, does not aim to represent all the movements of a particular individual in the situation he witnessed, nor does he aim to achieve the greatest possible degree of perceptual similarity between his own movements and the movements they represent. Instead, he will aim to *single out* particular features or "details" of the situation or the individuals involved in it:

Die Stimme des Überfahrenen, um ein Detail herauszugreifen, mag zunächst keine Rolle gespielt haben beim Unfall. Eine Meinungsverschiedenheit unter den Augenzeugen darüber, ob ein Ausruf, den man hörte ("Obacht"), vom Verunglückten oder von einem andern Passanten herrührte, kann unsern Demonstranten dazu veranlassen, die Stimme zu imitieren.¹⁵

The reason for "singling out" a particular "detail" for representation comes out of the demonstrator's epistemic interest: He is trying to establish whether the feature played a causal role in bringing about the condition under investigation or, if it is known that it did, to establish as clearly as he can what that role was.¹⁶

Theater as a practice of representation allows for this possibility. Any actual movement that is to be theatrically represented can be described in countless different ways.¹⁷ Only some of these possible descriptions characterize the movement in terms of its perceptual features—its "look," "sound" or "feel"—whereas others may describe it in terms of its consequences, its causes, or its conformity to certain regularities. Any movement that *represents* the actual movement in question will also satisfy a principally unlimited number of descriptions. The theatrical representation of an actual movement in principle therefore always poses the question *which* of its countless features the representing movement should be taken to represent.¹⁸

The conventions of Naturalism constitute only one possible and historically particular answer to this question: The participants are entitled in principle to take *any* perceptible feature of the representing movement to represent a perceptible feature of the movement that it represents, and if a participant knows that there is a perceptual divergence between the two movements, he is entitled to count this difference as a representational *shortcoming* of the representing movement. The audience in Brecht's "Straßenszene" does not work on these assumptions. This fact allows the demonstrator to single out for representation a particular movement from the sequence of events that led to the accident, and a particular set

of descriptions of this movement. In order to do so, the demonstrator or actor must be able to indicate (“zeigen” or “deuten”) which features of his own movement are to be taken to represent something and which are not, and which features of the represented movement these representationally relevant features are to represent.

Brecht developed and adapted a large number of techniques for accomplishing such ostensive acts.¹⁹ The actor may, for instance, draw attention to one of the movements in the sequence he is representing by showing it “in slow motion,” that is to say by representing it with a movement that takes up a longer period of time than the represented movement did. In doing so, the actor *estranges* the movement he represents: “Indem der Demonstrant nunmehr auf seine Bewegung genau achtet, sie vorsichtig, wahrscheinlich verlangsamt, vollzieht, erzielt er den V-Effekt; das heißt, er verfremdet den kleinen Teilvorgang, hebt ihn in seiner Wichtigkeit hervor, macht ihn merkwürdig.”²⁰ Once the actor has singled out and represented a particular movement from the sequence, he may proceed to represent an *alternative* movement—a kind of movement that the represented character could have performed instead of the movement he did perform. The actor may thereby prompt the audience to consider whether this counterfactual movement might have changed the sequence of events leading up to the accident and to the character’s injury in a way that would have prevented the accident, the injury, or both. He may, in other words, induce his audience to form and consider a causal hypothesis about the injury’s genesis.²¹ In order to draw attention to or give necessary information about a particular movement or feature, the actor may even “step out of character” and address his audience: “Angenommen, er ist nicht imstande, eine so schnelle Bewegung aufzuführen, wie der Verunglückte, den er nachahmt, so braucht er nur erläuternd zu sagen: der bewegt sich dreimal so schnell, und seine Demonstration ist nicht wesentlich geschädigt oder entwertet.”²²

The rule that the epistemic interest that motivates a representation sets up relevance criteria for what should be represented in it has consequences for all elements of stagecraft, including the choice and design of costumes, sets, props, and make-up.²³ An aspect of a represented individual’s external appearance, for example, has “significance” (“Bedeutung”) and should be represented only if it is known or suspected to have played a role in the sequence of events that led to the condition that is being investigated, or in the process of establishing the truth about that sequence: “Der Schnurrbart des Chauffeurs in der *Straßenszene* mag eine bestimmte Bedeutung haben. Er kann die Zeugenaussage der als möglich angenommenen Begleiterin beeinflussen haben.”²⁴

Brecht’s “*Straßenszene*” thus reveals the true significance for his method of the representational economy he encountered in the “Chinese Theater.” The fact that using cardboard boxes instead of expensive replicas of seventeenth-century chairs renders theatrical practice more mobile and less dependent on financial or other material resources is not the only advantage of such economy. Rather, the elasticity of theatrical representation of which the conventions of “Chinese theater” make use—the fact that understanding

one individual, movement, or thing as a representation of another does not depend on any close perceptual similarity between them—is a precondition of the kind of investigation Brecht describes in “Die Straßenszene.” The preoccupation of the Naturalistic theater with “copying” the perceptual appearance of ordinary life in all its aspects, by contrast, prevents Naturalism from taking advantage of the epistemic potential contained in the practice of theater. Only by limiting itself can the theater come to serve as an instrument for investigating any specific epistemic interest.

III: Explaining Social Facts

The epistemic interest that Brecht intended his theatrical method to serve requires the causal explanation of individual actions or general “ways of acting”: “Die Ursachenreihen menschlicher Handlungsweisen sollen...weiter verfolgbar sein, als durch andere ältere Spielweisen.”²⁵ The interest regards these actions and ways of acting as located in and conditioned by a wide causal field. To understand an action is to grasp certain of its causes and effects within a larger social environment—one that has become increasingly complex.²⁶

Wir alle haben sehr unklare Vorstellungen davon, wie unsere Handlungen sich auswirken, ja, wir wissen nur selten, warum wir sie unternehmen... Unsere Abhängigkeit auf allen Seiten in allen Entscheidungen ist uns nur dumpf fühlbar. Irgendwie hängt alles zusammen, fühlen wir, aber wie, wissen wir nicht. So erfährt die Menge den Brotpreis, die Kriegserklärung, den Mangel an Arbeit wie Naturereignisse, Erdbeben oder Überschwemmungen.²⁷

There is an important difference between the kind of event and condition that is to be explained here—“the bread price, the declaration of war, unemployment”—and the event and condition that were to be explained in the “street scene.” This difference is not grounded in the fact that the traffic accident and the resulting injury were easily localizable in time and space and that they could therefore be perceived by an observer at a single time and place. Rather, the difference is that it was possible to give an adequate description and causal explanation of the traffic accident which logically presupposed little more than a fundamental conception, shared between all adult human beings, of an external world in which “medium-sized”²⁸ objects move and causally interact in space and time, along with some similarly rudimentary concepts involving human agency.

No such description or explanation can be adequate for the distinctive kind of event and condition toward which Brecht’s three examples point. The descriptions “the bread price, the declaration of war, unemployment” have in common that each conceptually implies the existence of certain economic *structures* or other social *institutions*. In order to describe or explain events or conditions that fall under this type

of description as events that can happen or conditions that can obtain only where such structures exist, one has to rely on some conception of such structures.²⁹

This common feature of Brecht's three examples rests upon—but is not reducible to—the more basic fact that they essentially involve human action. This last fact is sufficient to differentiate them from the “natural events, earthquakes and floods” with which Brecht contrasts them in the passage.³⁰ Natural events are distinguished both from the events and conditions represented in the “street scene” and from social-institutional ones such as the bread price or unemployment by the fact that their correct description or explanation does not imply a conception of action. The point of drawing the contrast between these two kinds of condition or event is clear enough. Conditions such as the price of bread or unemployment have profound effects on the lives and well-being of countless human beings who either played no role at all in bringing them about, or who did not intend to contribute with any of their actions to bringing them about. Once an individual has become a victim of the condition in question, it is not in her power to change it. In this regard she experiences the condition in much the same way she might experience an earthquake or a flood—as an unchangeable “fate” that has to be endured.³¹ While this mode of experience does not necessarily involve a cognitive mistake, it also does not include an awareness of the fact that the condition in question itself consists of no more and no less than “bunches of human relations” (“Verklumpungen menschlicher Beziehungen”) or “a network of ways of acting between human beings” (“ein Geflecht von Verhaltensarten zwischen Mensch und Mensch”), i.e. in a concatenation of human actions and of the institutional structures to which such actions give rise over time.³²

Brecht's principal objection to theatrical Naturalism is that it was incapable of contributing to creating an awareness of this fact. While the early Hauptmann and other Naturalists “acknowledged the influence of the environment on human beings,”³³ their representations were limited by the Naturalistic criterion of accuracy to “photographing” the environment's perceptible “effects” on the individual characters and actions they represented.³⁴ Even the most perceptually accurate representation of such “effects” is unlikely to reveal whether they in turn are caused by natural or human-made conditions. Generally, a Naturalistic representation can only represent the difference between the two types of conditions to the extent that the characters themselves are aware of them and correctly articulate them to one another.³⁵ For Brecht, theatrical Naturalism thus contributes to the persistence of “ideology” primarily because of its inability to draw attention to or challenge an existing and widespread tendency to assimilate human-made conditions to natural conditions.³⁶ Doing so is a central task of his own method:

Nur durch große Anstrengungen, nur vermittelt viel Kunst, können wir diese Verklumpungen menschlicher Beziehungen, welche für Menschen schicksalhafte

Bedeutung haben, auflösen, können wir "das Schicksal" klären in ein Geflecht von Verhaltensarten zwischen Mensch und Mensch.³⁷

It is worth noting that the difference between natural and human-made events or conditions has nothing to do with their level of complexity. In order to satisfy certain epistemic interests, the description and causal explanation of a natural event may need to be long and logically complex, and it may need to rely upon sophisticated scientific concepts or theories. In fact, it is central to Brecht's view of the workings of economic and other social structures that they are not entirely unlike the events and conditions that natural science explains.³⁸ Like the latter, the social processes that constrain human actions and lie at the "source" of the "emotions and passions" that codetermine these actions can be explained by appeal to "regularities" or "laws":

Der heutige Mensch weiß wenig über die Gesetzmäßigkeiten, die sein Leben beherrschen. Er reagiert als gesellschaftliches Wesen meist gefühlsmäßig, aber diese gefühlsmäßige Reaktion ist verschwommen, unscharf, ineffektiv. Die Quellen seiner Gefühle und Leidenschaften sind ebenso verschlammt und verunreinigt als die Quellen seiner Erkenntnisse.³⁹

These regularities or laws ("Gesetzmäßigkeiten")—unlike those of Newtonian mechanics, though not, as Brecht points out, unlike those of the new quantum mechanics—cannot be expected to apply at the level of the individual elements in the system. They do not govern individual actions or individual agents, but apply strictly only to certain "classes" or "larger groups of human beings."⁴⁰ The predictions that can be made on the basis of such causal regularities about individual actions or agents are thus always "statistical":

Die *Kausalität*. Im Vergleich zu größeren Einheiten wie Klassen, wo wir schon eher, wenn wir uns vor Verallgemeinerungen hüten, Voraussagen machen können, sollten uns die Individuen nicht dazu verführen, eine andere Kausalität als die von den Physikern die statistische genannte zu erwarten... Erst gut eingefügt in große und in starker Bewegung befindliche Bewegungen gewinnt das Individuum einige Sicherheit und wird kalkulierbar.⁴¹

In order to be able to detect causal regularities in social processes one has to generate the concepts or categories that together sort individuals into the *right* kinds of group or "class," that is to say: into those groups or "classes" about which true generalizations and reliable predictions can be made. Identifying the regularities and defining the concepts must therefore be logically interdependent parts of one and the same process of observa-

tion and cognition. The product of this process is a theory or “model” of social structures and their history. Brecht’s model, of course, was Marx’s theory of history.

IV: Towards an Understanding of “Gestus”

The cognitive interest that Brecht wants theatrical representations to satisfy demands the correct description and explanation of certain parts or aspects of a social system: “Gegenstand der Darstellung ist also ein Geflecht gesellschaftlicher Beziehungen zwischen Menschen.”⁴² This “network” is the ultimate “object of representation” for Brecht, in the sense that its actual nature or character serves as the *criterion* by which the accuracy or realism of the representation has to be assessed. A representation is realistic only if the represented events conform to the same causal laws that govern actual events.⁴³

The aim of explaining individual actions or “ways of acting” by reference to a system of social relations that is governed by “statistical” regularities poses the challenge to which Brecht’s notion of the “Gestus” was designed to provide the answer. Since the practice of theater represents bodily movements by means of bodily movements, it usually represents *individual* human beings and their actions. One can follow Brecht in saying that theater typically represents interactive situations between individuals—“fictional or reported happenings between human beings.”⁴⁴ In order to satisfy the posited cognitive interest, theatrical representations must hence somehow show the “network of social relations,” or some of its aspects, *in* individual movements and actions.

In “Die Straßenszene,” Brecht describes how the resources of theatrical representation could be used to single out individual features of the movements, actions, characters, or settings it represents. He must now show how they can be used to foreground such features of movements and actions that are strictly *relational*.

The passage in which Brecht characterizes most concisely what he intends the term “Gestus” to designate at the same time indicates the notion’s central place in his method:

Es ist der Zweck des V-Effekts, den allen Vorgängen unterliegenden gesellschaftlichen Gestus zu verfremden. Unter sozialem Gestus ist der mimische und gestische Ausdruck der gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen zu verstehen, in denen die Menschen einer bestimmten Epoche zueinander stehen.⁴⁵

Furthermore, writes Brecht, “a *Gestus* can be understood as a complex of gestures, facial expressions and (ordinarily) utterances.”⁴⁶ One and the same “Gestus” can be shared by many different individual movements, actions and speech acts, be they actual or fictional. This is to say that each “Gestus”

is a specific *kind* of action, designated and defined by a description or set of descriptions that can be satisfied by many different movements, actions or speech acts. In this sense “words can be replaced with other words, gestures with other gestures, without thereby changing the *Gestus*.”⁴⁷

But what kinds of description designate a “*Gestus*”? In other words, what kinds of features must a description ascribe to a movement or action in order for it to count as describing it as a “*Gestus*”? From the passage just cited one can glean that the descriptions that define a social “*Gestus*” must somehow express “the social relations in which the human beings of a certain epoch stand to one another.” Brecht’s own examples of such descriptions show the notion’s openness. All, however, are descriptions that mention, imply, or point to certain attitudes (“*Haltungen*”) of the agent, most importantly her attitudes toward other people.⁴⁸ These attitudes “determine” or “decisively influence” the agent’s bodily stance, tone of voice and facial expressions: “Den Bereich der *Haltungen*, welche die Figuren zueinander einnehmen, nennen wir den gestischen Bereich. Körperhaltung, Tonfall und Gesichtsausdruck sind von einem gesellschaftlichen ‘*Gestus*’ bestimmt: die Figuren beschimpfen, komplementieren, belehren einander usw.”⁴⁹ The verbs Brecht mentions here as examples of descriptions that designate a “*Gestus*” are illocutionary and perlocutionary descriptions.⁵⁰ As such, they necessarily imply an action’s desired or actual effect on another person (or on a group of other people). Illocutionary descriptions designate a complex interpersonal relation that includes the agent’s intention to have a certain effect on her addressee, as well as the addressee’s recognition of these intentions.⁵¹ Perlocutionary descriptions designate a simpler interpersonal structure, since they do not depend for their satisfaction on the addressee’s recognition of the agent’s intentions. Both types of descriptions, however, logically imply certain facts about the agent’s attitudes toward her addressee and, in the context of a particular utterance, often allow broader conclusions about these attitudes. The same can be said about the adverbs and adjectives which Brecht accepts as descriptions designating a “*Gestus*”: “höflich oder zornig, demütig oder verächtlich, zustimmend oder ablehnend, listig oder ohne Berechnung.”⁵²

All descriptions of an action or movement that designate a social “*Gestus*,” then, supply information about a positive or negative attitude (“*Haltung*”) on the part of the agent. Despite some of Brecht’s formulations, the attitude in question does not have to be directed at another human being (or group of human beings). While some attitudes that are not directed at human beings clearly do not qualify as a “gesellschaftlicher *Gestus*,” others do:

Nicht jeder *Gestus* ist ein gesellschaftlicher *Gestus*. Die Abwehrhaltung gegen eine Fliege ist zunächst noch kein gesellschaftlicher *Gestus*, die Abwehrhaltung gegen einen Hund kann einer sein, wenn z. B. durch ihn der Kampf, den ein schlechtgekleideter Mensch gegen Wachhunde zu führen hat, zum Ausdruck kommt.⁵³

A man's "defensive attitude" toward a dog can be described as a "gesellschaftlicher Gestus" even when the man is exclusively concerned with the threatening animal, and his attitude thus has no human beings among its intentional objects. Brecht hints that the man's movements can be so described whenever the dog belongs to or is controlled by a human being (or group of human beings) who stands in some salient "social relation" to him.⁵⁴ In order to describe the movements as a social "Gestus," a description would thus have to mention, imply or somehow point to some such social relation.

Considering this passage in relation to Brecht's definition of a "natural" event, one can say that it is only impossible to describe a man's "defensive attitude" toward a fly as a social "Gestus" when the nuisance or threat posed by the fly is entirely natural, in the sense that it cannot be traced to human agency. As Brecht's phrase "zunächst noch" may hint, there are circumstances in which a "defensive attitude" toward a fly can be described as a social "Gestus." One may think of a situation in which a man's attempts to get rid of a fly are motivated by a fear of contracting malaria, and in which the actions or inaction of certain institutions—governmental, international, or commercial—have contributed to the emergence of the danger of contraction or contribute to its persistence. In order to designate a defensive movement in this situation as a social "Gestus," its description would have to mention, imply, or point to at least one of the institutional factors in the situation's causal history. Crucially, however, it is not necessary that the person whose movement is described in this fashion be himself aware of any of these factors.⁵⁵

According to Brecht, even actions whose primary intention is to deal with or master an inanimate object can be described as a social "Gestus," under certain conditions: "Versuche, auf einer glatten Ebene nicht auszurutschen, ergeben erst dann einen gesellschaftlichen Gestus, wenn jemand durch ein Ausrutschen 'sein Gesicht verlöre', d.h. eine Geltungseinbuße erlitt." ⁵⁶ More generally, such actions can be described as a social "Gestus" whenever they have consequences for others or for the agent's standing in relation to others, and whenever they have significant causes in the actions of others or in the agent's perception of the actions or perceptions of others. Even movements that are performed in the absence of other human beings and intended under descriptions that neither mention nor imply other human beings can be described as a social "Gestus." This point is particularly important, since Brecht insists that any movement that constitutes *labor* ("Arbeit") can be described as a social "Gestus." Although much labor consists in movements that are immediately directed at the shaping, transformation, or manipulation of inanimate matter, all labor takes place within and is shaped by a social structure: "Der Arbeitsgestus ist zweifellos ein gesellschaftlicher Gestus, da die auf die Bewältigung der Natur gerichtete menschliche Tätigkeit eine Angelegenheit der Gesellschaft, eine Angelegenheit zwischen Menschen ist."⁵⁷

Even Brecht's most detailed examples show that the descriptions that designate an action as a social "Gestus" need not provide a great deal

of information about the social relations in which the action is imbricated, and that they need not deploy any specific vocabulary:

Ein Mensch, der einen Fisch verkauft, zeigt unter anderem den Verkaufsgestus. Ein Mann, der sein Testament schreibt, eine Frau, die einen Mann anlockt, ein Polizist, der einen Mann prügelt, ein Mann, zehn Männer auszählend, in all dem steckt sozialer Gestus. Ein Mann, seinen Gott anrufend, wird bei dieser Definition erst ein Gestus, wenn dies im Hinblick auf andere geschieht oder in einem Zusammenhang, wo eben Beziehungen von Menschen zu Menschen auftauchen.⁵⁸

The “Gestus” or description here of “selling something” (“Verkaufsgestus”) implies the existence of the institution of property and the practice of exchange, but does not specify the form which this general institution and practice take on a particular occasion or at a particular juncture in history: Is Brecht’s “human being who sells a fish” engaging in barter or in a money transaction?⁵⁹ Is he a fisherman selling his catch, did he herself buy the fish from a fisherman before selling it, or did he buy it from an intermediary? Is he selling the fish for his own subsistence or for profit accumulation? Is he an independent fishmonger or an employee of a seafood chain store? Similarly, the notion of “writing one’s will” implies little more than the existence of a legal structure that recognizes private property, an economic structure that allows for some accumulation of wealth, and a principle of inheritance.

In order to designate a social “Gestus,” a description of an actual or fictional action must correctly show, or at least point toward, the action’s position in the “network of social relations” in which it is situated. The textual evidence just cited demonstrates that this requirement does *not* imply for Brecht that the description must use the technical concepts with which Marx’s theory would categorize and describe the action in question. The description need not, for example, explicitly situate the action in relation to the productive forces, the relations of production, or the legal-institutional superstructure that characterize the particular mode of production within which it was performed. None of the descriptions which Brecht explicitly recognizes as designating a “Gestus” contains any terms that are exclusive to or even typical of Marx’s theory of history. At the very least, however, the requirement in question must entail that the description be *consistent* with the terms with which Marx’s theory would categorize and describe the action. Yet this cannot be quite enough. Given the aims of Brecht’s theatrical method as a whole, one can say that the theatrical representation of an action must lead the audience to conceive of the represented action in terms of a description or set of descriptions that *points them toward* conceiving the action in Marxian terms. If the spectators do so, the representation has succeeded in foregrounding the “Gestus” of the action.

V: Theory and Praxis, Truth and Action

The apparent laxness of this requirement is in fact explained by a core feature of Brecht's conception of realism, one that is in turn explained by a core feature of Marx's theory of history—namely, the so-called “unity of theory and praxis.” The aim of Brecht's theatrical method, after all, is not to endow the spectator with the theoretical and factual knowledge that would enable her to give a detailed Marxian description of every action she encounters—to turn her, *per impossibile*, into a perfect Marxian theorist. It is, rather, to endow her with sufficient conceptual resources and facts to allow her to arrive at an understanding of the “network of social relations” and her own position within it that will enable her to act in accordance with the interests that correspond to that position.

In the same essay in which Brecht says that it is the purpose (“Zweck”) of the “Verfremdungseffekt” to estrange the social “Gestus” of all represented actions, he also speaks of the “V-Effekt, der den *einzig*en Zweck verfolgt, die Welt so zu zeigen, daß sie behandelbar wird.”⁶⁰ Unless one wishes to saddle Brecht with an explicit contradiction, one must conclude that he thought of these two “purposes” as equivalent at some deeper level of analysis: to foreground every action's “Gestus” is to show the world as “capable of being acted upon.” Brecht's “philosopher” elaborates on the latter idea: “Wir haben jene Nachbildungen der Wirklichkeit... zu verbessern versucht, indem wir sie so anlegten, daß derjenige, der sie gewahrt, instand gesetzt ist, die nachgebildete Wirklichkeit tätig zu beherrschen.”⁶¹ The realism or accuracy of all theatrical and artistic representation can be decided by an appeal to successful action. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”⁶²: “Ein Realist ist, wer entgegen irreführenden Darstellungen die Realität zu Wort kommen läßt, d.h. Darstellungen gibt, welche als Grundlage erfolgreichen Handelns dienen können.”⁶³ Consequently, a representation is unrealistic if agents who take it as the “basis” of their actions tend to fail: “Die Kunst wird nicht unrealistisch, wenn sie die Proportionen ändert, sondern wenn sie diese so ändert, daß das Publikum, die Abbildungen praktisch für Einblicke und Impulse verwendend, in der Wirklichkeit scheitern würde.”⁶⁴

There is no reason to conclude from such passages that Brecht was under the sway of American Pragmatism, as some recent commentators have suggested.⁶⁵ Neither Brecht's reading of Francis Bacon nor his reception of Rudolf Carnap's and Oskar Neurath's logical empiricism in the 1930s provide any evidence that he regarded successful action as the *criterion* of truth in the natural sciences.⁶⁶ Brecht does not intend to propose successful action as the general and sole criterion by which to judge all truth claims, but as the criterion for his definition of the realism of artistic representations. Such a representation can be realistic in Brecht's sense without providing the truth about the “look” of the object it represents, in the same way in which a carmaker's “construction sketch” can be realistic by virtue of being capable of guiding the construction of a functioning car, rather than by providing “the truth about the car's external appearance.”⁶⁷ If it were possible to demonstrate empirically that an artistic representation tends to

lead those who participate in its production and reception to perform actions that would have to be judged by the relevant criterion to be incorrect, one would thereby have shown the representation to be unrealistic. Conversely, in order to back up a claim that a given representation is unrealistic, one would have to be able to offer considerations which support the empirical claim that the representation tends to lead to actions that are incorrect by the relevant criterion.

When understood in these terms, Brecht's insistence on action as the ultimate arbiter of representational realism can be fully explained by appeal to Marx's theory of history. The theory closely links the question of the truth of any theory or system of beliefs about social reality to "praxis."⁶⁸ To understand the nature of this claimed link and its consequences for Marx's view of the status of his own theory, it is helpful to differentiate between three distinct claims that Marx makes about beliefs and theories about social reality in general.⁶⁹ The first of these claims concerns the genesis of such beliefs, the second their function, and the third their truth.

Put in the most basic terms, Marx's *genetic* claim is that all beliefs or theories about social reality are human-made and therefore historical in origin. They are themselves a part of the total social reality they are about.⁷⁰ Moreover, such beliefs and theories are shaped by choices, evaluative assumptions, or exclusions that have their causal roots in "the material activities and interactions of human beings."⁷¹ Unless an evaluative belief or theory about social reality is simply idiosyncratic, it is therefore an "expression"—accurate or distorted—of interests that are shared by some actual group of human beings as a matter of contingent historical fact. For Marx, the historically decisive groups are of course the "classes" into which the economic structure of a given society divides its members. Accordingly, all historically consequential beliefs or theories about social reality express the shared interests of one or other such class.⁷² They arise from and are shaped by the daily lives of the members of the class—by the needs and desires which their "material activities" generate and by the constraints imposed upon them.⁷³

Marx's second, *functional* claim is built on the premises that the beliefs and theories about social reality that individuals or social groups hold guide their actions, and that the historically decisive interest of a class consists in winning or maintaining class rule. Accordingly, Marx's claim about the causal role of such beliefs or theories takes a slightly different form depending on whether the class that has produced them has already attained a dominant position vis-à-vis the other classes or whether it is in the process of attaining such a position. In the case of ruling classes, Marx's claim is that the beliefs and theories produced by the class in question tend to lead to actions on the part of those who hold them that causally contribute to the continued dominance of the class. If the criterion for whether or not an action is *correct* consists in whether or not it is in the historical interest of the class to which the agent belongs, these beliefs and theories therefore lead to correct actions on the part of those individuals who are in fact members of the ruling class.⁷⁴ In the case of historically ascendant

classes, Marx's functional claim is that the beliefs and theories produced by the class in question lead to actions that contribute to that class *becoming* dominant.⁷⁵ By the criterion just described, they thus lead to correct actions on the part of those individuals who are in fact members of the ascendant class.

Marx's *epistemic* claim, finally, is that the respective functions that the social beliefs and theories of historically ascending and ruling classes have had to satisfy have at the same time constituted a systematic source of distortion. In order to play their part in helping the class that produced them gain or maintain a dominant position, the beliefs or theories in question had to present the interests of that class as interests that were also shared by members of certain *other* classes.⁷⁶ In this context, Marx and Engels primarily concern themselves with the political and moral philosophies of the European Enlightenment, which present the class interests of the ascending bourgeoisie as universally human.⁷⁷

Marx's claim that his own theory and the evaluative judgments and concepts it contains are not themselves *ideological* rests on these three claims. Marx accepts that the genetic and functional claims just sketched hold true of his theory as well, but argues that there is no reason to conclude from this fact that the theory is not *true*. Like other historically consequential theories of social reality, Marx's theory arises from the contingent interests of a particular class, expresses these interests, and serves these interests.⁷⁸ Unlike them, it can acknowledge that this is the case and expressly conceive itself, in Engels's phrase, as the "theoretical expression of the proletarian movement."⁷⁹ The theory can afford to be self-reflexive or dialectical in this manner, because it does not need to hide or suppress its own genesis or function in order to gain the support of any of the members of the class whose interests its adoption does *not* serve. Since the proletariat has become increasingly superior in numbers and in strength to its adversary, its "theoretical expression" does not have to represent itself as disinterested, neutral or independent from any particular political aims. Instead, it can be open about being a means to a practical end. As a "weapon" in the proletariat's struggle, the theory is itself a part of the class's "praxis."⁸⁰ Its elaboration, dissemination, and reflexive application all serve the practical purpose of bringing about a successful proletarian revolution.⁸¹

Marx's view that his theory's lack of impartiality or objectivity in this sense does not undermine its claim to being true cannot, of course, be reduced to the claim that it has no practical and systematic need to distort its objects. Although Marx nowhere denies that there are propositions about social reality—empirically verifiable generalizations about the functioning of capitalist economic structures, say—on whose truth or falsity epistemic subjects can agree *irrespective* of their class interest and other evaluative commitments, he clearly rejects as illusory the idea that there could be an adequate theory of social reality that would be free of propositions that are intrinsically evaluative and dependent on particular class interests.⁸² Marx' theory therefore has to contain a rationale for the claim that the evaluative propositions it encompasses are to count as true, rather than simply as good

for or adequate to the interest of the proletariat. I take it that this rationale must be premised on the thought that there will and can be no point of view or theory that is epistemically superior or equivalent to the point of view or theory of the proletariat, from which the interests and evaluations of the proletariat could be criticized as inadequate or bad, and that there is therefore no possible criterion by which they could be judged to be *false*. The epistemic superiority of the standpoint of the proletariat *consists* for Marx in the fact that there will not and cannot be an historically more “advanced” standpoint, and this idea evidently depends on his conception of history as progress—as the dialectical elimination of tensions or “contradictions” that culminates in an end state that does not contain any such “contradictions” and must therefore be regarded as “better” than any state that does. While one may doubt that any consideration to this effect would in fact be *sufficient* to warrant the ascription of truth to statements that express proletarian evaluations, some such consideration is certainly *necessary* to do so. It is an obvious truth that Marx’s theory can only be known to be true when its central prediction is actualized, that is to say, when the proletarian revolution has abolished the capitalist mode of production. Less obviously, it is also the case that the validity of one criterion that has to be satisfied in order for the theory’s truth to be confirmed is only established (and can only be established) when the revolution has taken place.⁸³ In any case, Marx’s theory establishes an essential link between truth and action. The theory’s truth *depends* upon the successful historical action of the proletariat, in the sense that the revolution provides a necessary criterion of both the truth of the theory and the success of the proletariat’s action as a class.

Brecht’s concept of “Gestus” is based on the attempt to apply this theoretical and practical criterion not only to Marx’s theory as a whole but also to the kinds of description or representation that can be given of *individual* actions or interactive situations. Just as an action is “good” or “successful” to the extent that it produces results that are consistent with or beneficial for the interest of the proletariat, that is to say, to the extent that it contributes to the likelihood of a successful revolution, so a kind of description or representation that can be given of individual actions or interactive situations is “good” or “realistic” to the extent that the actions that are performed on the basis (“Grundlage”) of descriptions or representations that fall under the kind can be relied upon to be “good” or “successful.”⁸⁴ In sum, then, Brecht’s statements about the link between the social “Gestus” and successful action can be understood on these grounds to mean that action-descriptions or action-representations that designate a social “Gestus” have to be such that they can be relied upon to lead to actions that are consistent with or beneficial for the interest of the proletariat. Such descriptions or representations must somehow pick out and accentuate a feature of the individual actions that would also be picked out and accentuated by a description of the action that was couched strictly in the terms of Marx’s theory. Conversely, if it were possible to show that characterizing observed or represented actions with a certain kind of description would lead to actions that are inconsistent with the interest of the proletariat, one would have shown that that kind of description does not designate a social “Gestus.”

Notes

1 For Brecht's discussion of the concept of realism, see Brecht, "Realistische Abbildungen des menschlichen Verhaltens," "Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus," "Volkstümliche Literatur," "Das Volkstümliche," "Die Expressionismusdebatte," "Praktisches zur Expressionismusdebatte," "Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise," "Bemerkung zu 'Weite und Vielfalt der realistischen Schreibweise,'" "Über den Realismus," "Über Realismus," "Über realistisches Schreiben," "Über den formalistischen Charakter der Realismustheorie," "Die Essays von Georg Lukács," "Realität als Prozeß," "Beispiel für Realismus," "Roman als Wirklichkeit?," "Übergang vom bürgerlichen zum sozialistischen Realismus," "Über sozialistischen Realismus," "Glossen zu einer formalistischen Realismustheorie," "Über Georg Lukács," "Ergebnisse der Realismusdebatte in der Literatur," "Gibt es realistische Parabeln? Waren Cervantes, Rabelais, Aristophanes, Lafontaine, Swift Realisten?," all in Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Vol 22.1, *Schriften 2*, ed. Werner Hecht et al. (Berlin, Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau and Suhrkamp, 1988-1998), henceforth cited as BFA 22.1. Selections from Brecht's polemic against Lukács are in Hans-Jürgen Schmitt, ed., *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973). Some of these texts are translated in Fredric Jameson, ed., *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007), 68-85.

2 "PHILOSOPH Die Illusion einer Örtlichkeit entsteht, wenn die Kopien der Elemente optisch genau (und auch akustisch genau) und lückenlos sind und die Elemente des Theaters verdeckt sind. Jedoch kann Illusion auch erzeugt werden, wenn die Schauspieler sehr suggestive Reaktionen auf nicht Vorhandenes zeigen." (Brecht, "Der Messingkauf" B100, in BFA 22.2, 760.)

3 "Der Messingkauf" B118, in BFA 22.2, 785.

4 "Bemerkungen über die chinesische Schauspielkunst," in BFA 22.1, 151-55. The passage reappears in the essay "Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst" from 1936 (BFA 22.1, 200-10), which is Brecht's first written use of the term "Verfremdung."

5 "Die Versuche führten zu einer großen Vereinfachung in Apparat, Darstellungsstil und Thematik." ("Über experimentelles Theater," in BFA 22.1, 555.)

6 "Der Messingkauf" B6, in BFA 22.2, 707.

7 "Die Straßenszene: Grundmodell einer Szene des epischen Theaters," in BFA 22.1, 371-81.

8 "Relativität der Kennzeichen des Realismus," in "Notizen über realistische Schreibweise," in BFA 22.2, 620.

9 Brecht insists that, just like any other theatrical representations, those produced by Naturalism are informed by the "opinions" and "intentions" of their makers: "Ohne Ansichten und Absichten kann man keine Abbildungen machen. Ohne Wissen kann man nichts zeigen; wie sollte man da wissen, was wissenswert ist?" ("Kleines Organon für das Theater" 55, in BFA 23, 86.) Some of these "views" and "intentions" embody, express or depend upon the producer's political commitments, whether they be recognized as such by the representation's producers or recipients or not: "DRAMATURG Es ist dir doch wohl klar, daß man es bei den naturalistischen Stücken auch nur mit den Meinungen der Stückeschreiber zu tun hatte? Die erste naturalistische Dramatik (der Hauptmann, Ibsen, Tolstoi, Strindberg) wurde mit Recht geradezu eine Tendenzkunst geschimpft." ("Der Messingkauf" B21, in BFA 22.2, 719; see also *ibid*, 718.) "Es [the Brechtian theater] verteidigte etwa seine Neigung zu gesellschaftlichen Tendenzen, indem es gesellschaftliche Tendenzen in allgemein anerkannten Kunstwerken nachwies, unauffällig nur dadurch, daß sie eben die anerkannten Tendenzen waren." ("Organon," Vorrede, in BFA 23, 65.)

- 10 "Die Straßenszene," in BFA 22.1, 371.
- 11 "Zweck der Vorführung ist es, die Begutachtung des Vorfalls zu erleichtern. Die Mittel der Vorführung entsprechen dem." (Ibid, 381.)
- 12 "Es liegt dem epischen Theater daran, sein Grundmodell an eine Straßenecke zu legen, das heißt zurückzugehen auf allereinfachstes, 'natürliches' Theater, auf ein gesellschaftliches Unternehmen, dessen Beweggründe, Mittel und Zwecke praktische, irdische sind." (Ibid, 378.)
- 13 "Die Demonstration wird z.B. beherrscht von der Frage des *Schadensersatzes* usw. Der Chauffeur hat seine Entlassung, den Entzug des Führerscheins, Gefängnis zu befürchten, der Überfahrene hohe Klinikkosten, Verlust seiner Stelle, dauernde Verunstaltung, womöglich Arbeitsuntauglichkeit." (Ibid, 374.)
- 14 Ibid, 373.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 For the same reason, the demonstrator may also want to represent such features of the sequence of events that did play or may have played a role in the process of establishing the truth about that sequence (see below).
- 17 I rely here (and below) on the philosophical account of action developed and defended by Donald Davidson. "Actions, Reasons, and Causes" (1963), "Agency" (1971), and "Intending" (1978), all in Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- 18 The question can be asked even when the representing movement itself has a perceptible feature that the represented movement is known to possess as well. The rules that jointly constitute the practice of theater do not mandate that the representing movement's possession of the feature should be representationally relevant.
- 19 All these techniques depend on the fact that the actor is not expected to strive to provide a representation of the character that is as complete or well-rounded as possible: "Für unseren Straßendemonstranten bleibt der Charakter des zu Demonstrierenden eine Größe, die er nicht völlig auszubestimmen hat. Innerhalb gewisser Grenzen kann er so und so sein, das macht nichts aus. Den Demonstranten interessieren seine unfallerzeugenden und unfallverhindernden Eigenschaften." ("Die Straßenszene," in BFA, 22.1, 375.) Brecht openly borrowed techniques he found in various historical forms or styles of theater and adapted them for his own purpose: "Das altgriechische, mittelalterlich europäische und das asiatische Theater benützen sehr differenzierte Verfremdungstechniken. Die gesellschaftlichen Funktionen sind jeweils sehr verschieden." ("Überblick," in BFA 22.1, 560.)
- 20 "Die Straßenszene," in BFA 22.1, 377.
- 21 For a classic account of the role of counterfactuals in causal reasoning, see John L. Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).
- 22 "Die Straßenszene," in BFA 22.1, 372.
- 23 "Trotzdem wird ein Theater, das in den wesentlichen Elementen nicht über die Darbietungen unserer *Straßenszene* hinausgehen will, in der Imitation gewisse Schranken anerkennen müssen. Es muß einen Aufwand rechtfertigen können aus dem Zweck heraus." (Ibid, 374.)
- 24 Ibid, 379-80.
- 25 "[Zeichnung und Konstruktionsskizze]" (1940/41), in BFA 22.2, 665.
- 26 "In der Tat sind die gegenseitigen Beziehungen der Menschen unsichtiger geworden, als sie es je waren." ("Kleines Organon für das Theater," in BFA 23, 72.)
- 27 "Der Messingkauf," in BFA 22.2, 711-12.

- 28 J.L. Austin famously referred to such objects as "moderate-sized specimens of dry goods." (Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) 8.)
- 29 An explanation of some such event or condition that relied only on the terms of physics, chemistry, biology and the other natural sciences would likely be practically impossible, and certainly beside the point.
- 30 I am assuming that human agency played no part in causing the relevant "earthquakes" and "floods," since I take it that the absence of human causation is the definitive feature of "natural events" in Brecht's sense.
- 31 "Die Vorgänge hinter den Vorgängen als Vorgänge unter Menschen," in BFA 22.1, 519-20; "Notizen über realistische Schreibweise," in BFA 22.2, 635; "Der Messingkauf" B55, in BFA 22.2, 735.
- 32 "Der Messingkauf" B55, in BFA 22.2, 735; see below.
- 33 As Brecht writes about Hauptmann: "Der Einfluß der Umgebung auf die Menschen wurde zugegeben, aber nicht, um auf diese den revolutionären Geist zu lenken; die Umgebung trat als Schicksal auf, wurde nicht als von Menschen aufgebaut und von Menschen veränderbar dargestellt." ("Notizen über realistische Schreibweise," in BFA 22.2, 635.)
- 34 "Die Vorgänge aber, die Prozesse, die es doch geben mußte, deren Auswirkungen hier fotografiert waren und die hier unter dem Begriff: Schicksal liefen, waren als 'natürliche' dunkel und führten den Bürger (bei Ibsen) in ein unbestimmtes 'Licht' (er hatte Aussichten), den Proletarier aber (bei Hauptmann) ins Dunkle (er hatte keine Aussichten)." (BFA 21, 319)
- 35 The point is particularly damaging since many Naturalistic playwrights were especially concerned with the social-institutional conditions that inhibited or stunted the capacity of human beings at a particular historical juncture to understand or articulate the conditions that codetermined or constrained their lives and actions. Georg Lukács and Peter Szondi both emphasize this fact in their respective critiques of Naturalism. See Lukács, *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas* (1909), in Frank Benseler, ed., *Werke*, Vol 15 (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1981), and Szondi, *Theorie des modernen Dramas (1880-1950)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963).
- 36 "Der Messingkauf" B46, in BFA 22.2, 730.
- 37 *Ibid*, 735.
- 38 Brecht's "philosopher" puts his ambition to understand the endeavours of human beings as follows: "Ich will immer wissen, wie ihre Unternehmungen zustande kommen und ausgehen, und ich bin darauf aus, einige Gesetzmäßigkeiten darin zu erkennen, die mich instand setzen könnten, Voraussagen zu machen." (*Ibid*, 780.)
- 39 "Über experimentelles Theater," in BFA 22.1, 548.
- 40 "Die Kausalität erscheint zwingend nur bei größeren Menschengruppen, bei Klassen." ("Grenzen der nichtaristotelischen Dramatik," in BFA 22.1, 393.)
- 41 "[Das Individuum. Die Kausalität]" (1941/42), in BFA 22.2, 692. Brecht draws some conclusions from this view that are of great importance for understanding his approach to characters and characterization in his own plays. See especially "Der Messingkauf" B71 and B86, in BFA 22.2, 744, and 751.
- 42 "Die Vorgänge hinter den Vorgängen als Vorgänge unter Menschen," in BFA 22.1, 520.
- 43 "Realistisch ist eine Kunst, wenn ihre Abbildungen der Wirklichkeit den Gesetzen folgen, die in ihr herrschen." ("[Realität als Prozess]" (1938/39), in BFA 22.1, 459.)

- 44 "Theater" besteht darin, daß lebende Abbildungen von überlieferten oder erdachten Geschehnissen zwischen Menschen hergestellt werden, und zwar zur Unterhaltung." ("Organon" 1, in BFA 23, 66.)
- 45 "Kurze Beschreibung einer neuen Technik der Schauspielkunst, die einen Verfremdungseffekt hervorbringt," in BFA 22.2, 646.
- 46 "Unter einem Gestus sei verstanden ein Komplex von Gesten, Mimik und (für gewöhnlich) Aussagen, welchen ein oder mehrere Menschen zu [sic] einem oder mehreren Menschen richten." ("Über den Gestus)" (1940/41), in BFA 22.2, 616.)
- 47 "Worte können durch andere Worte ersetzt, Gesten durch andere Gesten ersetzt werden, ohne daß der Gestus sich darüber ändert." (Ibid, 617.)
- 48 "Unter Gestus soll nicht Gestikulieren verstanden sein... Es handelt sich um Gesamthaltungen. Gestisch ist eine Sprache, wenn sie auf dem Gestus beruht, bestimmte Haltungen des Sprechenden anzeigt, die dieser andern Menschen gegenüber einnimmt." ("Über gestische Musik," in BFA 22.1, 329.)
- 49 "Kleines Organon für das Theater" 61, in BFA 23, 89.
- 50 John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).
- 51 Peter F. Strawson, "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts," in *Philosophical Review* 73.4 (October 1964): 439-60.
- 52 "Es ist ein vorzügliches Kriterium gegenüber einem Musikstück mit Text, vorzuführen, in welcher Haltung, mit welchem Gestus der Vortragende die einzelnen Partien bringen muß, höflich oder zornig, demütig oder verächtlich, zustimmend oder ablehnend, listig oder ohne Berechnung." ("Über gestische Musik," in BFA 22.1, 331.)
- 53 Ibid, 330.
- 54 "Kurze Beschreibung einer neuen Technik der Schauspielkunst, die einen Verfremdungseffekt hervorbringt," in BFA 22.2, 646 (see above).
- 55 This fact may be somewhat obscured by those of Brecht's characterizations of the notion of the "Gestus" that describe it in terms of the "attitudes that the figures assume toward one another." "Haltungen, welche die Figuren zueinander einnehmen." ("Kleines Organon für das Theater" 61, in BFA 23, and 89; see above.)
- 56 "Über gestische Musik," in BFA 22.1, 330.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 "[Über den Gestus]" (1940/41), in BFA 22.2, 617.
- 59 I abstract from the fact that Brecht is alluding here to his play *Mann ist Mann* (BFA 2, 95, 171).
- 60 "Kurze Beschreibung einer neuen Technik der Schauspielkunst, die einen Verfremdungseffekt hervorbringt," in BFA 22.2, 646, 647 (my italics).
- 61 "Der Messingkauf" B79, in BFA 22.2, 748.
- 62 Friedrich Engels uses the English proverb in the introduction to the English edition of "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific" from 1892. The context of the quotation is of immediate relevance to my discussion below: "Ebenso gibt unser Agnostiker zu, daß all unser Wissen beruht auf den Mittellungen, die wir durch unsre Sinne empfangen. Aber, setzt er hinzu, woher wissen wir, ob unsre Sinne uns richtige Abbilder der durch sie wahrgenommenen Dinge geben? Und weiter berichtet er uns: Wenn er von Dingen oder ihren Eigenschaften spricht, so meint er in Wirklichkeit nicht diese Dinge und ihre Eigenschaften selbst, von denen er nichts Gewisses wissen kann, sondern nur die Eindrücke, die sie auf seine Sinne gemacht haben. Das ist allerdings eine Auffassungsweise, der es

schwierig scheint, auf dem Wege der bloßen Argumentation beizukommen. Aber ehe die Menschen argumentierten, handelten sie. 'Im Anfang war die Tat.' Und menschliche Tat hatte die Schwierigkeit schon gelöst, lange ehe menschliche Klugtuerei sie erfand. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In dem Augenblick, wo wir diese Dinge, je nach den Eigenschaften, die wir in ihnen wahrnehmen, zu unserm eignen Gebrauch anwenden, in demselben Augenblick unterwerfen wir unsre Sinneswahrnehmungen einer unfehlbaren Probe auf ihre Richtigkeit oder Unrichtigkeit. Waren diese Wahrnehmungen unrichtig, dann muß auch unser Urteil über die Verwendbarkeit eines solchen Dings unrichtig sein, und unser Versuch, es zu verwenden, muß fehlschlagen. Erreichen wir aber unsern Zweck, finden wir, daß das Ding unsrer Vorstellung von ihm entspricht, daß es das leistet, wozu wir es anwandten, dann ist dies positiver Beweis dafür, daß innerhalb dieser Grenzen unsre Wahrnehmungen von dem Ding und von seinen Eigenschaften mit der außer uns bestehenden Wirklichkeit stimmen. Finden wir dagegen, daß wir einen Fehlstoß gemacht, dann dauert es meistens auch nicht lange, ehe wir die Ursache davon entdecken; wir finden, daß die unserm Versuch zugrunde gelegte Wahrnehmung entweder selbst unvollständig und oberflächlich oder mit den Ergebnissen andrer Wahrnehmungen in einer durch die Sachlage nicht gerechtfertigten Weise verkettet worden war. Solange wir unsre Sinne richtig ausbilden und gebrauchen und unsre Handlungsweise innerhalb der durch regelrecht gemachte und verwertete Wahrnehmungen gesetzten Schranken halten, solange werden wir finden, daß die Erfolge unsrer Handlungen den Beweis liefern für die Übereinstimmung unsrer Wahrnehmungen mit der gegenständlichen Natur der wahrgenommenen Dinge." (Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Vol 22 (Berlin, GDR: Dietz, 1963), 296, henceforth cited as Marx/Engels, *Werke* 22.) Engels uses an abbreviated version of the proverb in a letter to Marx from December 2, 1861. (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow, London: Progress Publishers and Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-2005), Vol 41, 330.)

63 "[Realität als Prozess]" (1938/39), in BFA 22.1, 459.

64 "Kleines Organon für das Theater" 73, in BFA 23, 96.

65 See Steve Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory: Marxism, Modernity and the Threepenny Lawsuit* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1997).

66 See Brecht's marginal notes to Rudolf Carnap's essay "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache" in his copy of *Erkenntnis* II (4: 1931), 219-41, and to Otto Neurath's essays "Wege der wissenschaftlichen Weltanschauung" in *Erkenntnis* I (2-4: 1930), 106-25, and "Soziologie im Physikalismus" in *Erkenntnis* II (5-6: 1931), 393-441; Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Berlin.

67 "Denken Sie an den Unterschied zwischen der Zeichnung eines guten Graphikers, die ein Auto darstellt, und der Konstruktionskizze eines Autobauers. Das Bild kann vollständig wahrheitsgetreu sein, und doch kann man nach dieser Zeichnung das Auto weder konstruieren, noch fahren. Kann man es nicht konstruieren und nicht fahren, so kann man es nicht verstehen, man weiß nicht die Wahrheit darüber. Aus der Skizze des Autobauers erfährt man diese Wahrheit. Allerdings gibt sein Bild vielleicht nicht die Wahrheit über das äußere Aussehen des Autos wieder, man weiß daraus nicht, wie ein Auto aussieht." ("[Zeichnung und Konstruktionskizze]" (1940/41), in BFA 22.2, 664-65.)

68 Marx's second thesis on Feuerbach contains a rather heroic formulation of this posited link: "Die Frage, ob dem menschlichen Denken gegenständliche Wahrheit zukomme—ist keine Frage der Theorie, sondern eine *praktische* Frage. In der Praxis muß der Mensch die Wahrheit, i.e. Wirklichkeit und Macht, Diesseitigkeit seines Denkens beweisen. Der Streit über die Wirklichkeit oder Nichtwirklichkeit des Denkens—das von der Praxis isoliert ist—ist eine rein *scholastische* Frage." (Marx "Thesen über Feuerbach," in Marx/Engels, *Werke* 5, 5.) All italics in this and the following quotations are Marx's or Engels's own.)

69 I consider the following reconstruction of Marx's theory of history to be consistent in substance and emphasis with the reading of Marx offered by Brecht's "teacher" Karl Korsch ("Über meinen Lehrer," in BFA 22.1, 45). See Korsch, "Marxismus und Philosophie," "Der Standpunkt der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung," "Die Marxsche Dialektik," "Über materialistische Dialektik," all in Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main, Wien: Europäische Verlagsanstalt and Europa Verlag, 1966).

70 "[D]ie *theoretische*, von der Philosophie her datierende politische Partei... erblickte in dem jetzigen Kampf *nur den kritischen Kampf der Philosophie mit der deutschen Welt*, sie bedachte nicht, daß die *seitherige Philosophie* selbst zu dieser Welt gehört und ihre, wenn auch ideelle, *Ergänzung* ist." (Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung," in Marx/Engels, *Werke 1*, 384.) Compare Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie*, 84-85.

71 "Die Produktion der Ideen, Vorstellungen, des Bewußtseins ist zunächst unmittelbar verflochten in die materielle Tätigkeit und den materiellen Verkehr der Menschen, Sprache des wirklichen Lebens. Das Vorstellen, Denken, der geistige Verkehr der Menschen erscheinen hier noch als direkter Ausfluß ihres materiellen Verhaltens. Von der geistigen Produktion, wie sie in der Sprache der Politik, der Gesetze, der Moral, der Religion, Metaphysik usw. eines Volkes sich darstellt, gilt dasselbe. Die Menschen sind die Produzenten ihrer Vorstellungen, Ideen pp., aber die wirklichen, wirkenden Menschen, wie sie bedingt sind durch eine bestimmte Entwicklung ihrer Produktivkräfte und des denselben entsprechenden Verkehrs bis zu seinen weitesten Formationen hinauf. Das Bewußtsein kann nie etwas Andres sein als das bewußte Sein, und das Sein der Menschen ist ihr wirklicher Lebensprozeß... Die Moral, Religion, Metaphysik und sonstige Ideologie und die ihnen entsprechenden Bewußtseinsformen behalten hiermit nicht länger den Schein der Selbständigkeit. Sie haben keine Geschichte, sie haben keine Entwicklung, sondern die ihre materielle Produktion und ihren materiellen Verkehr entwickelnden Menschen ändern mit dieser ihrer Wirklichkeit auch ihr Denken und die Produkte ihres Denkens. Nicht das Bewußtsein bestimmt das Leben, sondern das Leben bestimmt das Bewußtsein." (Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 3*, 26-27.)

72 "Auf den verschiedenen Formen des Eigentums, auf den sozialen Existenzbedingungen erhebt sich ein ganzer Überbau verschiedener und eigentümlich gestalteter Empfindungen, Illusionen, Denkweisen und Lebensanschauungen. Die ganze Klasse schafft und gestaltet sie aus ihren materiellen Grundlagen heraus und aus den entsprechenden gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen. Das einzelne Individuum, dem sie durch Tradition und Erziehung zufließen, kann sich einbilden, daß sie die eigentlichen Bestimmungsgründe und den Ausgangspunkt seines Handelns bilden." (Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 8*, 139.) "Die neuen Tatsachen zwangen dazu, die ganze bisherige Geschichte einer neuen Untersuchung zu unterwerfen, und da zeigte sich, daß...die jedesmalige *ökonomische* Struktur der Gesellschaft die reale Grundlage bildet, aus der der gesamte Überbau der rechtlichen und politischen Einrichtungen sowie der religiösen, philosophischen und sonstigen Vorstellungsweise eines jeden geschichtlichen Zeitabschnitts in letzter Instanz zu erklären sind." (Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 19*, 208.)

73 "Diese [materialistische] Geschichtsauffassung beruht also darauf, den wirklichen Produktionsprozeß, und zwar von der materiellen Produktion des unmittelbaren Lebens ausgehend, zu entwickeln und die mit dieser Produktionsweise zusammenhängende und von ihr erzeugte Verkehrsform, also die bürgerliche Gesellschaft in ihren verschiedenen Stufen, als Grundlage der ganzen Geschichte aufzufassen und sie sowohl in ihrer Aktion als Staat darzustellen, wie die sämtlichen verschiedenen theoretischen Erzeugnisse und Formen des Bewußtseins, Religion, Philosophie, Moral etc. etc., aus ihr zu erklären und ihren Entstehungsprozeß aus ihnen zu verfolgen, wo dann natürlich auch die Sache

in ihrer Totalität (und darum auch die Wechselwirkung dieser verschiedenen Seiten aufeinander) dargestellt werden kann. Sie hat in jeder Periode nicht, wie die idealistische Geschichtsanschauung, nach einer Kategorie zu suchen, sondern bleibt fortwährend auf dem wirklichen Geschichtsboden stehen, erklärt nicht die Praxis aus der Idee, erklärt die Ideenformationen aus der materiellen Praxis und kommt demgemäß auch zu dem Resultat, daß alle Formen und Produkte des Bewußtseins nicht durch geistige Kritik, durch Auflösung ins 'Selbstbewußtsein' oder Verwandlung in 'Spuk', 'Gespenster', 'Sparren' etc., sondern nur durch den praktischen Umsturz der realen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, aus denen diese idealistischen Flausen hervorgegangen sind, aufgelöst werden können—daß nicht die Kritik, sondern die Revolution die treibende Kraft der Geschichte auch der Religion, Philosophie und sonstigen Theorie ist... Diese Summe von Produktionskräften, Kapitalien und sozialen Verkehrsformen, die jedes Individuum und jede Generation als etwas Gegebenes vorfindet, ist der reale Grund dessen, was sich die Philosophen als 'Substanz' und 'Wesen des Menschen' vorgestellt, was sie apotheosiert und bekämpft haben..." (Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke* 3, 37-38.)

74 "Die Gedanken der herrschenden Klasse sind in jeder Epoche die herrschenden Gedanken, d.h. die Klasse, welche die herrschende *materielle* Macht der Gesellschaft ist, ist zugleich ihre herrschende *geistige* Macht. Die Klasse, die die Mittel zur materiellen Produktion zu ihrer Verfügung hat, disponiert damit zugleich über die Mittel zur geistigen Produktion, so daß ihr damit zugleich im Durchschnitt die Gedanken derer, denen die Mittel zur geistigen Produktion abgehen, unterworfen sind. Die herrschenden Gedanken sind weiter Nichts als der ideelle Ausdruck der herrschenden materiellen Verhältnisse, die als Gedanken gefaßten herrschenden materiellen Verhältnisse; also der Verhältnisse, die eben die eine Klasse zur herrschenden machen, also die Gedanken ihrer Herrschaft. Die Individuen, welche die herrschende Klasse ausmachen, haben unter Andern auch Bewußtsein und denken daher; insofern sie also als Klasse herrschen und den ganzen Umfang einer Geschichtsepoche bestimmen, versteht es sich von selbst, daß sie dies in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung tun, also unter Andern auch als Denkende, als Produzenten von Gedanken herrschen, die Produktion und Distribution der Gedanken ihrer Zeit regeln; daß also ihre Gedanken die herrschenden Gedanken der Epoche sind. Zu einer Zeit z.B. und in einem Lande, wo königliche Macht, Aristokratie und Bourgeoisie sich um die Herrschaft streiten, wo also die Herrschaft geteilt ist, zeigt sich als herrschender Gedanke die Doktrin von der Teilung der Gewalten, die nun als ein 'ewiges Gesetz' ausgesprochen wird." (Ibid, 46-48.)

75 "Hieraus folgt, daß alle Kämpfe innerhalb des Staats, der Kampf zwischen Demokratie, Aristokratie und Monarchie, der Kampf um das Wahlrecht etc. etc., nichts als die illusorischen Formen sind, in denen die wirklichen Kämpfe der verschiedenen Klassen untereinander geführt werden..., und ferner, daß jede nach der Herrschaft strebende Klasse, wenn ihre Herrschaft auch, wie dies beim Proletariat der Fall ist, die Aufhebung der ganzen alten Gesellschaftsform und der Herrschaft überhaupt bedingt, sich zuerst die politische Macht erobern muß, um ihr Interesse wieder als das Allgemeine, wozu sie im ersten Augenblick gezwungen ist, darzustellen. Eben weil die Individuen *nur* ihr besonderes, für sie nicht mit ihrem gemeinschaftlichen Interesse zusammenfallendes suchen, überhaupt das Allgemeine illusorische Form der Gemeinschaftlichkeit, wird dies als ein ihnen 'fremdes' und von ihnen 'unabhängiges', als ein selbst wieder besonderes und eigentümliches 'Allgemein'-Interesse geltend gemacht, oder sie selbst müssen sich in diesem Zwiespalt bewegen wie in der Demokratie." (Ibid, 33-34.)

76 Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung," in Marx/Engels, *Werke* 1, 388.

77 "Jede neue Klasse nämlich, die sich an die Stelle einer vor ihr herrschenden setzt, ist genötigt, schon um ihren Zweck durchzuführen, ihr Interesse als das gemeinschaftliche Interesse aller Mitglieder der Gesellschaft darzustellen, d.h. ideell ausgedrückt: ihren Gedanken die Form der Allgemeinheit zu geben, sie als die einzig vernünftigen, allgemein gültigen darzustellen. Die revolutionierende Klasse tritt von vornherein, schon weil sie einer

Klasse gegenübersteht, nicht als Klasse, sondern als Vertreterin der ganzen Gesellschaft auf, sie erscheint als die ganze Masse der Gesellschaft gegenüber der einzigen, herrschenden Klasse. [Marginal note by Marx: "Die Allgemeinheit entspricht 1. der Klasse contra Stand, 2. der Konkurrenz, Weltverkehr, etc., 3. der großen Zahlreichheit der herrschenden Klasse, 4. der Illusion der *gemeinschaftlichen* Interessen (im Anfang diese Illusion wahr), 5. der Täuschung der Ideologen und der Teilung der Arbeit."] ... Dieser ganze Schein, als ob die Herrschaft einer bestimmten Klasse nur die Herrschaft gewisser Gedanken sei, hört natürlich von selbst auf, sobald die Herrschaft von Klassen überhaupt aufhört, die Form der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung zu sein, sobald es also nicht mehr nötig ist, ein besonderes Interesse als allgemeines oder 'das Allgemeine' als herrschend darzustellen." (Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 3*, 47-48.) See also Friedrich Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 19*, 190.

78 "Der Kommunismus ist für uns nicht ein *Zustand*, der hergestellt werden soll, ein *Ideal*, wonach die Wirklichkeit sich zu richten haben [wird]. Wir nennen Kommunismus die *wirkliche* Bewegung, welche den jetzigen Zustand aufhebt. Die Bedingungen dieser Bewegung ergeben sich aus der jetzt bestehenden Voraussetzung." (Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 3*, 35.) "Die Kommunisten sind also praktisch der entschiedenste, immer weitertreibende Teil der Arbeiterparteien aller Länder; sie haben theoretisch vor der übrigen Masse des Proletariats die Einsicht in die Bedingungen, den Gang und die allgemeinen Resultate der proletarischen Bewegung voraus... Die theoretischen Sätze der Kommunisten beruhen keineswegs auf Ideen, auf Prinzipien, die von diesem oder jenem Weltverbesserer erfunden oder entdeckt sind. Sie sind nur allgemeine Ausdrücke tatsächlicher Verhältnisse eines existierenden Klassenkampfes, einer unter unseren Augen vor sich gehenden geschichtlichen Bewegung." (Marx and Engels, "Manifest der kommunistischen Partei," in Marx/Engels, *Werke 4*, 474-75.) On this point, see also the sharp contrast Engels draws between the self-understanding of "scientific socialism," which understands that "its roots lie in the material, economic facts" and the "Utopian" socialists Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen (Engels, *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*, in Marx/Engels, *Werke 19*, 189, 191, 194, 200, 208-209, 211).

79 Ibid, 228. Compare Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie*, 87-89.

80 "Schon als entschiedener Widerpart der bisherigen Weise des *deutschen* politischen Bewußtseins verläuft sich die Kritik der spekulativen Rechtsphilosophie nicht in sich selbst, sondern in *Aufgaben*, für deren Lösung es nur ein Mittel gibt: die *Praxis*... Die Waffe der Kritik kann allerdings die Kritik der Waffen nicht ersetzen, die materielle Gewalt muß gestürzt werden durch materielle Gewalt, allein auch die Theorie wird zur materiellen Gewalt, sobald sie die Massen ergreift." (Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung," in Marx/Engels, *Werke 1*, 385.)

81 Ibid, 385, 391.

82 Compare Korsch, *Marxismus und Philosophie*, 101-2, 108-9.

83 The thought that a theory or critique of an existing or past society can be *true* only if it is dialectical in this specific sense constitutes the core of Western Marxism. In various versions, it underlies not only Korsch's and Lukács's accounts of Marx's theory but also the project of Frankfurt School Critical Theory. See Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), Max Horkheimer, "Traditionelle und kritische Theorie," and Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophie und kritische Theorie," both in *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* VI (1937). From the point in the late 1930s when Horkheimer's and Adorno's Critical Theory begins to lose confidence in the central prediction of Marx's "philosophy of history," it has trouble justifying the claim to its own epistemic privilege. On this point, compare Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), Vol 2, 559-60.

84 Brecht summarizes many of the aspects of his conception of realism (and its dependence on Marx's theory of history) I describe here in one of his polemical responses to Lukács's conception of realism: "Wir werden nicht nur dann von realistischer Schreibweise sprechen, wenn man zum Beispiel 'alles' riechen, schmecken, fühlen kann, wenn 'Atmosphäre' da ist und die Fabeln so geführt sind, daß seelische Expositionen der Personen zustande kommen... *Realistisch* heißt: den gesellschaftlichen Kausalkomplex aufdeckend/ die herrschenden Gesichtspunkte als die Gesichtspunkte der Herrschenden entlarvend/ vom Standpunkt der Klasse aus schreibend, welche für die dringendsten Schwierigkeiten, in denen die menschliche Gesellschaft steckt, die breitesten Lösungen bereit hält/ das Moment der Entwicklung betonend/ konkret und das Abstrahieren ermöglichend." ("Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus [1]," in BFA 22.1, 409.)

