

Marx's Theory of Property and Alienation

Of the various theories of property examined in this symposium, several posit property relations as a genre of social relations and several furnish moral critiques of property relations. Marx's theory fits into both of these categories. But Marx was the only theorist that critically examined those aspects of property relations which are general (i.e. common to all societies) and those which are specific to capitalism. Consequently of the theories examined, Marx's is the only social scientific and moral critique of capitalism as a socioeconomic system.

For Marx, human life is a social process in which man satisfies human needs and develops human powers through social activities which appropriate and transform nature. The relations between the individual and society and between the individual and nature are reciprocally mediated, that is, the relation between an individual and nature is mediated by that individual's relations in society, while most social relations are mediated by the mode of people's appropriation of nature.

"Property", Marx writes, "originally means no more than a human being's relation to his natural conditions of production as belonging to him. Thus, in its origins property merely involves the individual's recognition that the objects of nature with which he produces are "*natural presuppositions* of his self, which only form, so to speak, his extended body."² But property is also always a social relation. Thus property is the link connecting an individual with both nature and society:

An isolated individual could no more have property in land and soil than he could speak. He could, of course, live off it as substance, as do the animals. The relation to the earth as property is always mediated through the occupation of the land and soil...by the tribe, the commune, [or some other social formation] in some more or less naturally arisen or already historically developed form. The individual can never appear here in the dot-like isolation in which he appears as mere free worker. If the objective conditions of his labour are presupposed as belonging to him, then he himself is subjectively presupposed as a member of a commune, through which his relation to land and soil is mediated.³

In fact, property relations as relations to nature and relations among members of a social group are necessary preconditions for human life in all societies, in all times:

[The] *natural conditions of existence*... [for any human being] are themselves double: (1) of a subjective and (2) of an objective nature. He finds himself a member of a family, clan, tribe etc.... and, as such a member, he relates to a specific nature (say, here, still earth, land soil) as his own inorganic being, as a condition of his production and reproduction.⁴

In notebooks IV and V of the *Grundrisse* (pp. 373-554) Marx devotes extensive discussion to precapitalist forms of property ownership. He discusses primitive clan, Asiatic despotism, Roman, Germanic and feudal forms of property. After a lengthy discussion of each of these modes of ownership, Marx summarizes the features which appear more or less in common in all precapitalist property relations:

The main point is this: In all these forms - in which landed property and agriculture form the basis of the economic order, and where the economic aim is hence the production of use values, that is, the *reproduction of the individual* within the specific relation to the commune in which he is its basis - there is to be found: (1) Appropriation not through labour, but presupposed to labour, appropriation of the natural conditions of labour, of the *earth* as the original instrument of labour as well as its workshop and repository of raw materials. The individual relates simply to the objective conditions of labour as being his;

relates to them as the inorganic nature of his subjectivity, in which the latter realizes itself; the chief objective condition of labour does not itself appear as a *product* of labour, but is already there as *nature*; on one side of the living individual, on the other the earth, as the objective condition of his reproduction; (2) but this *relation* to land and soil, to the earth, as the property of the labouring individual - who thus appears from the outset not merely as labouring individual, in this abstraction, but who has an *objective mode of existence* in his ownership of the land, an existence *presupposed* to his activity, and not merely as a result of it, a presupposition of his activity just like his skin, his sense organs, which of course he also reproduces and develops etc. in the life process, but which are nevertheless presuppositions of this process of his reproduction - is instantly mediated by the naturally arisen, spontaneous, more or less historically developed and modified presence of the individual as *member of a commune* - his naturally arisen presence as a member of a tribe etc.⁵

Property relations, then, express both the manner in which people relate to nature and the manner in which they relate to each other. Both aspects of property relations are of central significance in the process that Marx labels "reproduction." The process of reproduction is, for Marx, a natural and social process containing numerous reciprocally interrelated aspects which form an organic whole. This concept is so important for Marx's critique of capitalism that we must examine it in greater detail.

For Marx human life is a continuous, interrelated social process. If the society is undergoing fundamental change, i.e. if it is in the process of transformation from one relatively stable mode of production to another, then the process will appear chaotic and unpredictable. But as long as a particular mode of production remains viable and relatively stable, the social process will have a certain observable, recurring, spiraling circularity.

Looked at from the standpoint of the social relations of production, the circularity can be seen in the fact that human activity always presupposes preexisting social relations by virtue of which individual actions are coordinated and integrated to make the process a social process. But the very social relations which were the prerequisites for individual social action are themselves the end products of the collective activities of the individuals involved in the process. Social relations do not have a mythical, metaphysical or ontological reality that exists independently of individuals; they are continuously created and recreated by the very actions of individuals. Thus, the preexisting social relations of production must always be recreated as the end result of productive activity or the mode of production will disintegrate. Therefore, in capitalism, for example, the various social classifications or categories of income are the *end results* of the productive process. In addition they correspond to the kinds of property relations characteristic of capitalism, but they are also the prerequisites for capitalist production. Thus prior capitalist production within capitalist property relations is always a prerequisite for current capitalist production. In Marx's words, in order for capitalist production to generate income as wages, interest, rent and profit, these income categories

...presuppose that the *general* character of reproduction will remain the same. And this is the case as long as the capitalist mode of production continues. Secondly, it is presupposed moreover that the *specific relations* of this mode of production remain the same during a certain period, and this is in fact also more or less the case. Thus the result of production crystallises into a *permanent* and *therefore prerequisite* condition of production.⁶

Similarly, in the continuous process of production and consumption of material objects in which men satisfy their needs and develop their human powers, there is a spiraling, circular aspect. Productive activity (and for Marx this includes virtually all end-oriented activity, not simply that aspect of productive activity encompassed by capitalist wage labor or working for

hire) develops human powers. But productive activity presupposes human needs which give the activity its teleological end in consumption or satisfaction of the needs. Moreover, productive activity or the development of human powers also presupposes prior consumption or satisfaction of prior needs as a necessary precondition for physical exertion to take place.

This process (which integrates what most economists would call both production and consumption) is most generally what Marx refers to as “production,” or sometimes as “productive activity,” or sometimes simply as “life activity.” It is the process by which man makes inorganic nature into the produce of his labor, and thereby the process by which man creates himself physically, intellectually, aesthetically, spiritually and emotionally both as an individual and as a social species-being. Both human relations with nature and social relations among human beings are prerequisites to, as well as results of, the production process. And since both sets of relations together constitute property relations, it is clear that Marx defined property relations very broadly and that property relations are at the core of his scheme of human development. In Marx’s words:

The life of the species, both in man and in animals, consists physically in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man (or the animal) is, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as art - his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible - so also in the realm of practice they constitute a part of human life and human activity. Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling, etc. The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body - both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object, and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man’s inorganic *body* - nature, that is, insofar as it is not itself human body. Man *lives* on nature - means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man’s physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature....

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man’s species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created.⁷

Thus man’s labor (his entire sensuous activity) in transforming nature is a process in which he creates himself. But throughout all of his writings Marx continually insisted that human beings are a social species. To be human is to be social:

The production (creation) of life, both of one’s own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a twofold relation: on the one hand as a natural (i.e. a relation with nature), on the other hand as a social relation - social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end.⁸

Man is, for Marx, both a natural biological being and a social being. Man’s nature has a biological foundation which consists of innate needs and potential powers. It is only through social activity that these needs take on a specific form, that is become concrete, conscious desires. And it is only through social activity that these needs can be satisfied. Furthermore the nature and extent of the particular means used to satisfy these needs are social. For example, hunger has a biological foundation, but only in social intercourse does hunger become the desire for a

particular kind of food; and the means for procuring this kind of food are social. Moreover, not all human needs are satisfied by material substances. There are various social, psychological, or spiritual needs which have some biological basis, but which develop into conscious desires (for affection, approval, belongingness, etc., in general and in particular for a husband, a friend, membership in a club, etc.) only within a specific social context. Needless to say, the means of satisfying these needs are entirely social.

Needs are satisfied through social activities (through which they are also concretized into actual conscious desires). The social activities are also the only means by which potential human powers - which exist in original biological form as mere potentials - become actual powers of an individual. The powers or faculties which an individual develops are *social*. Only their potential is biological. The satisfaction of human (social) needs and the development of human (social) powers are, in reality, only one interconnected process of social practice in which the individual creates himself as an individual. This doctrine is so important (and so widely misunderstood) in Marx's writings that we shall quote him at length:

Activity and enjoyment, both in their content and in their *mode of existence* are *social*: *social* activity and *social* enjoyment. The *human* aspect of nature exists only for *social* man; for only then does nature exist for him as a *bond* with *man* -as his existence for the other [human being] and the other's existence for him - and as the life-element in human reality. Only then does nature exist as the *foundation* of his own *human* experience. Only here has what is to him his *natural* existence become his *human* existence, and nature become man for him.⁹

...[The] *perceptible* appropriation for and by man of the human essence and of human life, of objective man, of human achievements...should not be conceived merely in the sense of immediate one-sided enjoyment, merely in the sense of *possessing* or *having*. Man appropriates his comprehensive essence in a comprehensive manner, that is to say, as a whole man. Each of his *human* relations to the world - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, observing, experiencing, wanting, acting, loving - in short, all the organs of his individual being...are in their *objective* orientation, or in their *orientation to the object*,...the appropriation of *human* reality. Their orientation to their object is the *manifestation of the human reality*, it is human activity....¹⁰

It is obvious that the *human* eye enjoys things in a way different from the crude, non human eye; the human ear different from the crude ear etc....

On the one hand, therefore, it is only when the objective world becomes everywhere for man in society the world of man's essential powers - human reality, and for that reason the reality of his *own* essential powers - that all objects become for him the *objectification* of himself, become objects which confirm and realize his individuality, become *his* objects: that is, *man himself* becomes the object. The *manner* in which they become *his* depends on the nature of the *objects* and on the nature of the *essential power* corresponding to it; for it is precisely the *determinate nature* of this relationship which shapes the particular, *real* mode of affirmation. To the eye an object comes to be other than it is to the *ear*, and the object of the eye *is* another object than the object of the *ear*. The specific character of each essential power is precisely its *specific essence*, and therefore also the specific mode of its objectification, of its *objectively actual*, living *being*. Thus man is affirmed in the objective world not only in the act of thinking, but with all his senses.

On the other hand, let us look at this in its subjective aspect. Just as only music awakens in man the sense of music, and just as the most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear - is no object for it, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers - it can therefore only exist for me insofar as my essential

power exists for itself as a subjective capacity; because the meaning of an object for me goes only so far as my *sense* goes (has only a meaning for a sense corresponding to that object) - for this reason the *senses* of the social man *differ* from those of the non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolding richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective *human* sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form - in short, *senses* capable of human gratification, senses affirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also so-called mental senses, the practical senses (will, love, etc.), in a word, *human* sense, the human nature of the senses, comes to be by virtue of *its* object, by virtue of humanized nature.¹¹

Thus, for Marx, human productive activity is virtually synonymous with human purposive activity through which humans appropriate nature, satisfy human needs and develop human powers. In this process, production and consumption are reciprocally interconnected and form a unity. Similarly man's subjective self forms an interconnected unity with man's objective self - both his organic body and his inorganic body (nature). It is this total, interconnected unity that Marx calls the production process.

The unity of this productive life process is of absolutely central importance in understanding both Marx's critique of bourgeois theory and his critique of capitalism. It is therefore necessary and important to quote his writing at length on this issue:

Production is at the same time also consumption. Twofold consumption, subjective and objective. The individual who develops his faculties in production, is also expending them, consuming them in the act of production, just as procreation is in its way a consumption of vital powers. In the second place, production is consumption of the means of production which are used and used up and partly (as for example in burning) reduced to their natural elements. The same is true of the consumption of raw materials which do not remain in their natural form and state, being greatly absorbed in the process. The act of production is, therefore, in all its aspects an act of consumption as well....

Consumption is directly also production, just as in nature the consumption of the elements and of chemical matter constitutes production of plants. It is clear that in nutrition, for example, which is but one form of consumption, man produces his own body but it is equally true of every kind of consumption, which goes to produce the human being in one way or another.... Production furthers consumption by creating material for the latter which otherwise would lack its object. But consumption in its turn furthers production, by providing for the products the individual for whom they are products.... Without production, no consumption; but, on the other hand without consumption, no production; since production would then be without a purpose. Consumption produces production in two ways.

In the first place, in that the product first becomes a real product in consumption; e.g. a garment becomes a real garment only through the act of being worn; a dwelling which is not inhabited is really no dwelling; consequently, a product as distinguished from a mere natural object, proves to be such, first *becomes* a product in consumption. Consumption gives the product its finishing touch by annihilating it, since a product is the result of production not merely as the material embodiment of activity, but also as a mere object for the active subject.

In the second place, consumption produces production by creating the necessity for new production, i.e. by providing the ideal [mental or spiritual], inward, impelling [teleological] cause which constitutes the prerequisite of production. Consumption furnishes the impulse for production as well as its object, which plays in production the part of its guiding aim. It is clear that while production furnishes the material object of

consumption, consumption provides the ideal object of production, as its image, its want, its impulse and its purpose. It furnishes the object of production in its subjective form....In its turn, production:

First, furnishes consumption with its material, its object. Consumption without an object is no consumption, hence production works in this direction by producing consumption.

Second. But it is not only the object that production provides for consumption. It gives consumption its definite outline, its character, its finish.... For the object is not simply an object in general, but a definite object, which is consumed in a certain definite manner prescribed in its turn by production. Hunger is hunger; but the hunger that is satisfied with cooked meat eaten with fork and knife is a different kind of hunger from the one that devours raw meat with the aid of hands, nails, and teeth. Not only the object of consumption, but the manner of consumption is produced by production; that is to say, consumption is created by production not only objectively, but also subjectively. Production thus creates the consumers.

Third. Production not only supplies the want with material but supplies the material with a want. When consumption emerges from its first stage of natural crudeness and directness...it is itself furthered by its object as a moving spring. The want of it which consumption experiences is created by its appreciation of the product. The object of art, as well as any other product, creates an artistic and beauty-enjoying public. Production thus produces not only an object for the individual, but also an individual for the object.¹²

The important point to be emphasized here is that if production and consumption be considered as activities of one individual or of separate individuals, they appear at any rate as aspects of one process in which production forms the actual starting point and is, therefore, the dominating factor. Consumption, as a natural necessity, as a want, constitutes an internal factor of productive activity, but the latter is the starting point of realization and, therefore, its predominating factor, the act into which the entire process resolves itself in the end.¹³

This quotation is well worth studying carefully. It (and innumerable passages that could be quoted) clearly refutes the notion that Marx espoused a simplistic economic determinism in which "production" (in the much narrower way in which the term production is used in the orthodox social sciences and history) mechanically determines the mental, ideological and institutional "superstructure." Clearly the term "production" was used by Marx as an abstract generalization denoting the entire process of life-creating and life-affirming activities of human beings, including the material aspects as well as the mental, emotional and aesthetic aspects of that process. This is why, when Marx expressed himself more clearly and more adequately, he abandoned the crude first approximation of his theory (where he spoke as though the mode of production mechanically determined the superstructure) and used the metaphor (which more adequately captured the general nature of his abstract notion) of production as the universal light with which all the other colours are tinged and are modified through its peculiarity.¹⁴

Returning to our argument, we stated that Marx sees the human life process as involving elements of a spiraling circularity. We saw first that production presupposes existing social relations of production, including property rights, but that these very social relations are also the emergent results of the production process, as it continuously reproduces the social relations. Second, we saw that the social life process is one in which the satisfaction of needs presupposes human powers but that the development of these human powers is the consequence of productive activity that satisfies needs. The development of human powers presupposes needs but this development also creates needs and wants. The interconnection of needs and powers results in the

life-creating process in which the individual, through the interconnected circular process of production and consumption, creates himself both as an individual and as a species-being.

There is a third important vantage point from which the productive process appears as a circularity. The production of finished goods requires as a prerequisite previously produced goods in the form of tools, implements, partly processed raw materials and other produced means of production. This means “that products of previous work serve anew as means of production, as objects of labour, instruments of labour and means of subsistence for workers. The objective conditions of labour do not face the worker...as mere natural objects,...but as natural objects already transformed by human activity.”¹⁵ Hence, in order for the production process to continue, a portion of what is produced in any given time period must be created for use in future production. Thus, at any time present production both depends upon past production and provides for future production because the material conditions of production must be continuously used up and continuously reproduced for the future.

Therefore, in man’s life activities both production and consumption are reciprocally interconnected, and both are involved in human self-creation. Moreover, nature is, in Marx’s words, “man’s inorganic body” which makes this production possible. But not nature in isolation or apart from human consciousness and activities, but nature as it is known, molded and created in these activities. It follows that the previously produced material conditions of production are an integral part of “man’s inorganic body” as the self-created preconditions of productive activity and also as the material in which man objectifies both his conscious individual being and his species-being.

The foregoing discussion of the circular aspects of productive activity was concerned entirely with those aspects which Marx asserts (such assertions can be found in the *1844 Manuscripts*, *The Grundrisse*, *The Critique of Political Economy*, *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value*) are common to all modes of production. But they are effected and realized in varying degrees with varying consequences depending upon the property rights and the social relations of production that characterize a particular mode of production.

Nearly all of Marx’s writings were primarily concerned with analyzing the functioning and consequences of capitalist social relations of production. The most significant feature of capitalist relations of production is that the continuous, interconnected circular process of production (which is continuous in each of its three aspects we have just discussed) is fragmented and dissolved into discrete parts or aspects. Each part comes to be conceived as separate and self-contained. Within this context, the production-consumption process takes place as if each integrally related aspect were in fact a separate, self-contained part. This reflects the fact that the process, at each point in its separation or fragmentation, is mediated by commodity exchange. This chopping up or fragmenting of the process through the mediating function of commodity exchange makes the process appear to be four separate, disconnected processes--production, distribution, commodity exchange and consumption. In capitalism Marx observes that “between the producer and the product distribution steps in, which determines by social laws his share of products; that is to say, distribution steps in between production and consumption.”¹⁶ But, as Marx takes pains to show, the laws of distribution are themselves the outcome of property rights and the social relations of production and hence distribution is really an integral part of the production process. It appears to be separated from it because of the particular form of capitalist production - the production of commodities for exchange. In capitalism commodities and money are constantly circulating through the process of exchange:

Circulation [of money and commodities] is but a certain aspect of exchange, or it may be defined as exchange considered as a whole. Since *exchange* is an intermediary factor between production and its dependent, distribution, on the one hand, and consumption, on

the other, and since the latter [consumption] appears but as a constituent of production, exchange is manifestly also a constituent part of production.¹⁷

The basis of Marx's criticism of the classical economists was that they failed to see that exchange is but a subsidiary mechanism in the capitalist system. Viewed from the social standpoint it does not really separate the production process into the discrete self-contained processes of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, even though from the individual's standpoint exchange appears to make this separation. Yet capitalism functions as though this separation not only were real but also as though this separation had its basis in the ontological nature of material things and people. The classical economists abstracted each of these elements out of the interconnected process within which each is an integral, inseparable part and treated each in isolation from all of its essential connections to the whole processes. In Marx's opinion, it was their belief in the autonomy of these abstractions that led the classical economists to reify abstractions as things. This reification was the source of the obscurantist elements in classical political economy. Marx always insisted that in capitalism, as in all other modes of production, the production process is an interrelated, unified, single process:

The result we arrive at is not that production, distribution, exchange and consumption are identical, but that they are all members of one unit. Production [conceived of as the entire unitary process] predominates not only over production itself... [as conceived in the narrower manner of orthodox social science], but over the other elements as well. With it the process constantly starts over again.¹⁸

But the error of the classical economists in abstracting and reifying the separate conceptual aspects of the process is not simply based on wrong thinking that could be easily set right by more persuasive, more correct thinking. Capitalism actually functions as though certain abstractions were more real than the real people and real material objects that are involved in the process. Therefore, for Marx, a criticism of classical political economy had to be simultaneously a criticism of capitalism.

Capitalism, as a system of commodity exchange, systematically distorts the real nature of human wealth and of human existence. For Marx, real human wealth is identical with the extent of the development of human powers and the satisfaction of human needs.

In fact, however, when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc...? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature? The absolute working-out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick?¹⁹

In capitalism commodity production and commodity exchange distort the true nature of wealth: "The wealth in those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities.'"²⁰ A central source of difficulty in understanding the nature of commodities is the failure to clearly differentiate between those aspects of a commodity which are the result of it being a concrete, finite material thing with particular concrete physical features and those abstractions, which are based on particular, historically specific, and transitory social relations including property rights, that are symbolized by the commodity but have no inherent connection to the peculiar physical characteristics of the commodity as a finite, material object.

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another....

The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from the commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, something useful.... Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption: They also constitute the [material] substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth.²¹

Since useful material objects exist in all societies, and represent the material substance of wealth in all societies, it is clear that simply being a useful thing does not make an object a commodity. "In the form of society [capitalism] we are about to consider, they [commodities] are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange-value."²²

Exchange value, within the social context of a commodity producing and commodity exchanging society, is what transforms a useful material object (such as exists in every type of society) into a commodity. But exchange value is *not* a physical characteristic of a material thing. It is therefore merely a mental abstraction which reflects social relations among people and is not existentially or ontologically part of the material thing. Exchange value, Marx writes, "cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities."²³ It can therefore be nothing but a mental abstraction. But it is not an abstraction that was conjured up in the imagination or out of thin air. It is an abstraction arising out of the social relations of a commodity-producing society.

Products of human labor become commodities only when they are privately owned and are produced solely for exchange for money in a market, and not for the immediate use or enjoyment of the producers or anyone directly associated with the producers. "The mode of production in which the product takes the form of a commodity, or is produced directly for exchange," Marx wrote, "is the most general and most embryonic form of bourgeois production."²⁴ Commodity production is always dominated by the single minded quest for exchange-value:

Definite historical conditions are necessary that a product may become a commodity. It must not be produced as the immediate means of subsistence of the producer himself.... Production and circulation of commodities can take place, although the great mass of objects produced are intended for the immediate requirements of the producers, are not turned into commodities, and consequently social production is not yet by a long way dominated in its length and breadth by exchange-value.²⁵

In order for a society to be "dominated in its length and breadth by exchange-value," that is, in order for it to be *primarily* a commodity producing society, four historical prerequisites are necessary. First, there has to evolve such a degree of productive specialization that each individual producer produces and reproduces the same product (or even portion of a product) in a monotonous never-ending repetition. Second, such specialization necessarily requires the complete "separation of use-value from exchange-value."²⁶ Because life is impossible without the consumption of innumerable use-values, a producer can relate to his own produce only as an exchange-value and can only acquire his necessary use-values from the products of others. Third, a commodity producing society requires an extensive, well-developed market, which requires the pervasive use of money as a universal value equivalent, mediating every exchange. Fourth, whereas in most pre-capitalist societies some form of social ownership (with individuals granted the rights of use by some form of social consent) predominates over private ownership and reflects the social nature of production, in a commodity-producing society private property ownership predominates.

In a commodity-producing society, any given producer works in isolation from all other producers. He is, of course, socially and economically connected, or related, to other producers: many of them cannot continue their ordinary daily patterns of consumption without the

performance of his labor in the creation of a commodity which they consume; and he cannot continue his pattern of consumption unless innumerable other producers continuously create the commodities which he needs. Thus there is a definite, indispensable social relationship among producers.

Each producer, however, produces only for sale in the market. With the proceeds of his sale, he buys the commodities he needs. His well-being appears to depend solely on the quantities of other commodities for which his commodity can exchange. "The quantities vary continually," Marx wrote, "independently of the will, foresight and action of the producers. To them their own social action takes the form of the action of objects, which rule the producers, instead of being ruled by them."²⁷ Thus, a social relationship among producers appears to each producer to be simply a relationship between himself and an impersonal, immutable social institution - the market. And the market appears to involve simply a set of relationships among material things - commodities. "Therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear," Marx concluded, "not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as...relations between things."²⁸

Thus, exchange values are abstractions which reflect the mutual dependence of seemingly independent commodity producers. They are not material qualities of things but mental reflections of social relations. But they are mental abstractions which are absolutely necessary for a commodity-producing society to function. It is by acting as though these abstractions were inherent qualities of the useful products of labor that individuals are able to engage in exchange. And only by engaging in exchange can what erroneously appears to be private, individual production actually function as that which it truly is - social production.

But capitalism is more than simply a commodity-producing society. Capitalism comes into existence only when human productive activity itself becomes a commodity to be bought and sold in the market. But labor is not a thing like other commodities. It is an activity. The only thing involved is the laborer's own body - his mental and physical capacities as a living human organism. Now in a slave economy, human bodies are treated as things to be owned by other humans. But capitalism is not a slave economy. Therefore, the only way in which human productive activity can be sold as a commodity is through the recurring sale of control over a worker's body for finite periods of time.

But this control over a worker's body can only mean control over the worker's capacity to create. Marx called this capacity "labor power" and differentiated this capacity from the actual expenditure of labor or the realization of labor power. Labor power, then, is the capacity to work, or potential labor. When labor power is sold as a commodity, its use-value is simply the performance of work - the actualizing of the potential labor. When the work is performed it becomes embodied in a commodity. The commodity that is produced thus becomes the material objectification of the productive activity.

The existence of labor power as a commodity depends upon two essential conditions. First, labour-power can appear upon the market as a commodity, only if, and so far as, its possessor, the individual whose labour-power it is, offers it for sale, or sells it, as a commodity. In order that he may be able to do this he...must be the untrammelled owner of his capacity for labour, i.e., of his person....The owner of the labour-power...[must] sell it only for a definite period, for if he were to sell it rump and stump, once and for all, he would be selling himself, converting himself from a free man into a slave, from an owner of a commodity into a commodity....

The second essential condition...is...that the labourer instead of being in the position to sell commodities in which his labour is incorporated, must be obliged to offer for sale as a commodity that very labour-power, which exists only in his living self.

In order that man may be able to sell commodities other than labour-power, he must of course have the means of production, such as raw materials, implements, etc. No boots can be made without leather. He requires also the means of subsistence....

For the conversion of his money into capital, therefore, the owner of money must meet in the market with the free labourer, free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labor-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale, is short of everything necessary for the realization of his labour-power.²⁹

This, then, is capitalism's defining feature, differentiating it from a simple commodity-producing society. Capitalism exists when, in a commodity-producing society, one small class of people - capitalists - has monopolized the means of production through the laws of private property, and where the great majority of the direct producers - workers - cannot produce independently because they own no means of production. Workers are "free" to make one of two choices: starve or sell their labor power as a commodity.³⁰ Thus, capitalism is neither inevitable nor natural and eternal. It is a specific mode of production, which has evolved under specific historical conditions, and which has a ruling class that rules by virtue of its ability to expropriate surplus labor from the producers of commodities through the laws of private property and the processes of production and exchange:

One thing...is clear - Nature does not produce on the one side owners of money or commodities, and on the other men possessing nothing but their own labour-power. This relation has no natural basis, neither is its social basis one that is common to all historical periods. It is clearly the result of a past historical development, the product of many economic revolutions, of the extinction of a whole series of older forms of social production.³¹

For Marx, the fact that labor is always a social process means that there is in all societies at all times a division of labor and a consequent interdependence of laborers. In no society can an individual laborer produce individually in isolation. Hence, any human being is economically dependent upon other human beings. But in precapitalist society the "division of labour is...nothing but *coexisting labour*, that is, the coexistence of *different* kinds of labour which are represented in *different kinds* of products"³² which are necessary for productive individuals to sustain themselves. With capitalist private property two things happen. First, with private property, a social interdependence caused by the division of labor becomes a private dependence of the worker in which a single individual controls the products of the others upon whom the worker depends. Second, the division of labor undergoes a qualitative change. We shall briefly consider each of these.

In the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism the complex sets of obligations involved in feudal social property relations were generally not well understood by the participants in that transitional process. What was clearly understood, however, was that a nobleman, by accident of birth, had the right to expropriate the produce of others while playing no direct role in the production process. The antithesis of this feudal expropriation seemed, to many of the most radical thinkers of this period, to be a system of private property rights which would give the producer property rights over the products he created. All of the early defenses of private property, from Locke to the classical liberals, repeated this rationale.

This classical rationale for private property completely ignored the natural and social bases of human production. Nature, which furnishes the material that is creatively transformed in production, is not the product of any individual's productive endeavor. Moreover, the many products upon which any worker depends as means of consumption or tools and other means of production are the results of the labor of others. All of this is merely another way of saying that production is a social process in which individuals through definite social relations interact with and transform nature (and themselves).

The social historical process in which the natural and social means of production were transformed into privately owned commodities was referred to by Marx as the process of "primitive accumulation." In primitive accumulation, the capitalist class acquired (by methods which Marx recounted in vivid and lurid detail) ownership of the means of production. It was in this way that the workers' social interdependence (which exists in all societies) was transformed into the individual dependence of each worker on capitalists. In capitalism the natural and social prerequisites of productive endeavor confront the worker as independent, hostile, alien forces personified by capitalists:

Thus primitive accumulation ... means nothing but the separation of labour and the worker from the conditions of labour, which confront him as independent forces.... Once capital exists, the capitalist mode of production itself evolves in such a way that it maintains and reproduces this separation on a constantly increasing scale.³³

Thus, the classical liberal rationale for private property becomes a rationale for a new expropriation of the products of labor that is not unlike the feudal expropriation which classical liberalism attacked:

At first the rights of property seemed to us to be based on a man's own labour. At least, some such assumption was necessary since only commodity-owners with equal rights confronted each other, and the sole means by which a man could become possessed of the commodities of others, was by alienating his own commodities; and these could be replaced by labour alone. Now, however, property turns out to be the right, on the part of the capitalist, to appropriate the unpaid labour of others or its product, and to be the impossibility, on the part of the labourer, of appropriating his own product. The separation of property from labour has become the necessary consequence of a law that originated in their identity.³⁴

Once capitalist property relations dominate society the division of labor undergoes a qualitative change. In precapitalist societies individuals specialize in the production of one or a few products and, hence, the division of labor is "outside the workshop, as a *separation of occupations*....The division of labor in the capitalist sense...[is] the breaking down of the particular labour which produces a definite commodity into a series of simple and coordinated operations divided up amongst different workers."³⁵ This capitalist division of labour "within the workshop" significantly increases the dependence of the workers on the capitalists by reducing their productive skills and "by differentiating and increasing the indirect preliminary work [of other workers] that they require."³⁶ Thus, private ownership confers on capitalists the power to render laborers helpless by denying them the prerequisites of production.

Classical economists, at least from Nassau Senior onwards, constructed an ideology in which income from private property ownership was defended on the basis of the supposed "productivity of capital." Marx clearly saw that private property rights are simply a coercive social relation that has nothing to do with production:

The utilization of the products of previous labour, of labour in general, as materials, tools, means of subsistence, is necessary if the worker wants to use his products for new

production....But what on earth has this kind of utilization...of his product to do with the domination of his product over him, with its existence as capital, with the concentration in the hands of individual capitalists of the right to dispose of raw materials and means of subsistence and the exclusion of the workers from ownership of their products? What has it to do with the fact that first of all they have to hand over their product gratis to a third party in order to buy it back again with their own labour and, what is more, they have to give him more labour than is contained in the product and thus they have to create surplus product for him?

As if the division of labour was not just as possible if its conditions belonged to the associated workers...and were regarded by the latter as their own products and the material elements of their own activity, which they are by their very nature.³⁷

One of Marx's most central concerns was to analyze the effects of this particular form of property rights and consequent form of social relations of production as they affect individuals' abilities to develop their human powers and to satisfy their real human needs. In other words, how do capitalist private property rights affect the individual's capacity to create himself as a fully developed individual and as a human species-being (individual development and development as a species-being are not, for Marx, separate developments, but rather two sides of the same development)?

The effects of capitalism on individuals' development were discussed in nearly all of Marx's major writings. But they were discussed most fully and adequately in the *1844 Manuscripts*. Here he described the fragmentation of the production process through commodity exchange, the transformation of the means of production as well as the products of productive activity into commodities, and the transformation of human productive activity itself into a commodity, by a single term - alienation.

Alienation reflects the fact that capitalist commodity production fragments and dissociates the productive life processes of individuals. The producers (workers) are separated or alienated from both the means of physical subsistence and the previously produced means of production. In order to live and to produce they must sell their labor power as a commodity. After the capitalist uses their labor power, i.e. after he forces them to produce, he owns the products of their labor. Of course the capitalist accumulates wealth because the value of what workers produce exceeds the value of the labor power that they expend in production. The workers labor longer than is necessary for them to produce the value equivalent of their wage. This extra labor, or surplus labor, is the source of surplus value which accrues to capitalists in the forms of interest, rent and profit.

As we stated earlier, inorganic nature, in so far as it is understood and transformed by man, is an extension of man - it is man's "inorganic body." In particular, the previously created means of production which man uses in productive activity and the products in which his mental and physical activities become embodied through the production process are the most essential inorganic extensions of man himself. They are the most important elements of man's "inorganic body." Man's creative self-development depends upon his realization of himself in these inorganic extensions of himself. In capitalism the means of production are commodities owned by capitalists, while the objects created by labor also become commodities owned by capitalists.

Thus, in a commodity producing society, when the workers' means of subsistence, means of production and productive output are alienated from them in the form of commodities owned by nonworkers (capitalists), these commodities become capital. Capital is not a characteristic of these things as physical objects. It is a mental abstraction, which is symbolized by physical objects but is really a mental reflection of a coercive social relation:

Capital is productive of value only as a social *relation*, in so far as it is a coercive force on wage-labour, compelling it to perform surplus-labour.... It only produces value as the power of labour's own material conditions over labour when these are alienated from labour.³⁸

Under these circumstances, the relationship of labour to the conditions of labour is turned upside-down, so that it is not the worker who makes use of the conditions of labour, but the conditions of labour which make use of the worker."³⁹

This dissociation of the production process is at the same time a coercive fragmenting of man's productive activity; it estranges him from the objective, the subjective and the social aspects of his own life activity; it is the alienation of labor. Marx viewed the alienation of labor from four vantage points: (1) the relation of man to the products he creates, (2) the relation of man to his own productive activity, (3) the relation of a man to his own "species-being," and (4) the relation of man to other men.

First, in capitalism, man's relation to the products he creates is described in this way by Marx:

The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and size.... The *devaluation* of the world of men is in direct proportion to the *increasing value* of things. Labour produces not only commodities: it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity*....

This fact expresses merely that the object which labour produces - labour's product - confronts it as *something alien*, as a *paver independent* of the producer. The produce of labour is labour which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labour. Labour's realization is its objectification. Under these economic conditions [capitalism] this realization of labour appears as *loss of realization* for the workers; objectification [appears] as *loss of object and bondage to it*; appropriation [appears] as *estrangement, as alienation*.... So much does the appropriation of the object appear as estrangement that the more objects the worker produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the sway of his product, capital.

All these consequences are implied in the statement that the worker is related to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker expends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself - his inner world - becomes, the less belongs to him as his own.⁴⁰

Because of the pervasive misinterpretations of Marx's writings, two points from this quotation need to be emphasized. The first point to note is that even under capitalism, Marx continued to insist that the objects produced still represent the material objectification of man's subjective state. But because of private property rights, man is coercively prevented from freely using the means of production, and coercively prevented from personally (or collectively, in union with other producers with whom the individual must cooperate in productive activity) appropriating or using the objects he produces. The second point to note is that Marx consistently used the verb "appear" rather than "is" to describe alienation. This is because Marx's goal in writing the *1844 Manuscripts* was to critically analyze the effects of the fact that property rights are generally conceived of as "natural" and "eternal." They are taken for granted, or presupposed by most people. Thus the beginning sentences of Marx's discussion of "estranged labour" read: "We have proceeded from the premises of political economy. We have accepted its language and its laws. We have *presupposed private property*."⁴¹ Marx's point is that once private property is assumed, presupposed or taken for granted, then the material conditions of people's labor, which

are themselves merely the product of their labor, appear to be objects which are alien, coercive, oppressive forces over the laborers. Marx's purpose in writing the *manuscripts* (as well as most of his other writings) was to demonstrate analytically that this appearance is illusory. As long as workers hold these illusions to be true ideas they actively help to create their own oppression. The reality of the oppression is to be found in the forms of human coercion involved in the enforcement of property rights. Only because people take for granted or presuppose property rights does labor's realization appear as loss of realization, human objectification appear as loss of object and as bondage to object, and appropriation appear as estrangement. In reality, by the coercive enforcement of property rights, laborers' realization, their objectification, their appropriation, are forcefully and coercively separated from them, are stolen from them by other human beings.

This theft breaks the subjective-objective-subjective cycle of human self-production. Production begins with ideas and subjective powers within the individual. Through productive activity the subjective powers become objective powers as they are used to mold external material objects. And the subjective ideas become the model in the shape of which the material objects are molded. As the material objects become objectified ideas, the ideas are the teleological cause of which the objective product is the effect. Last, and very important, in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and using his products, the laborer converts his objectification back into a subjective appreciation of himself and his powers. Therefore, what began as a subjective state returns in the end as another subjective state, but in the latter subjective state the laborer mentally and emotionally realizes the development of his powers and the satisfaction of his needs through his own life-creating activities.

Capitalist private property as coercive theft prevents this last stage in the cycle from occurring. Labor is objectified in objects. But when the objects are coercively stolen and then used as the means to coercively force labor to do more work, then the objects do not appear subjectively to the laborer as the development of his powers and the satisfaction of his needs. The objects which he creates appear as the means of his enslavement, the diminution of his powers, and the denial of his needs.

Marx believed that in the early transition to capitalism, before capitalist property laws were taken for granted, the real nature of these property rights was much more closely seen. In *Theories of Surplus Value* he states that Martin Luther understood interest and profits better than most 19th century socialists. He quotes several long passages from Luther's writings. Here are some parts of these quotations:

Fifteen years ago I wrote against usury since it had already become so widespread that I could hope for no improvement. Since that time, it has exalted itself to such a degree that it *no longer wishes to be a vice, sin or infamy* but extols itself as downright virtue and honour as if it conferred a great favour on and did a Christian service to the people....

They also make a usury out of *buying and selling*.... When we have put a stop to this (as on the Day of Judgment), then we will surely read the lesson with regard to *usurious trade*....

Let whoever wants to do so extol himself, put on finery and adorn himself but pay no heed and keep firmly to the scripture... whoever takes more or better than he gives, that is usury and is *not a service, but a wrong* done to his neighbour, as when one steals and robs. All is not service and benefit to a neighbour that is called service and benefit.... A horseman does a great service to a robber by helping him to rob on the highway, and attack the people and the land. The papists do us a great service in that they do not drown, burn, murder all or let them rot in prison, but let some live and drive them out or take from them what they have.... The poets write about Cyclops Polyphemus, who said he would do Ulysses an act

of friendship, namely, that he would eat his companions first and then Ulysses last. Such services and good deeds are performed nowadays most diligently by... [those] who buy goods up, pile up stocks, bring dear times, increase the price of corn, barley and of everything people need; they then wipe their mouths and say: Yes - one must have what one must have; I let my things out to help people although I might - and could - keep them to myself...

But if this is the kind of service he does, then he does it for Satan himself; although a poor needy man requires such a service and must accept it as a service or a favour that he is not eaten up completely....

Therefore there is on this earth no greater *enemy of man*, after the devil, than a miser and a usurer, for *he wants to be God over all men....* A usurer and money-grubber, such a one would have the whole world perish of hunger and thirst, misery and want, so far as in him lies [the power], so that he may have all to himself and everyone *receive from him as from a God and be his serf for evermore....*

Therefore, a usurer and miser is, indeed, not truly a human being, sins not in a human way and must be looked upon as a werewolf, more than all the tyrants, murderers and robbers, nearly as evil as the devil himself, but one who sits in peace and safety, not like an enemy, but like a friend and citizen, yet robs and murders more horribly than any enemy or incendiary.⁴²

The capitalist “robs and murders more horribly than any enemy” and is like an inhuman “werewolf” because he steals more than simply some of the products of labor. He forcefully disrupts the life creating activities of human production and hence robs workers of some of the essential elements of their very life creation - of their very humanness. But once private property has become sacrosanct and is taken for granted, this werewolf power of capitalists comes to appear as a power exerted by the creations of laborers over the laborers themselves. Thus, the first vantage point from which Marx described alienation was that of the alienation of the product of labor from the laborers themselves.

Marx’s second vantage point in analyzing alienation was to look at the *activity* of producing in a capitalist society:

Estrangement is manifested...in the *act of production*, within the *producing activity* itself. How could the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself? The product is after all but the summary of the activity, of production. If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour is merely summarized the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself.

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour?

First, the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels at home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is *forced labour*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a *means* to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labour is shunned like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification.

Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs not to himself, but to another.... The worker's activity [is] not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self.

As a result, therefore man (the worker) only feels himself freely active in his animal functions - eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal.

Certainly eating, drinking, procreating, etc., are also genuinely human functions. But taken abstractly, separated from the sphere of all other human activity and turned into sole and ultimate ends, they are animal functions.⁴³

The third vantage point from which alienation can be viewed is the process by which man realizes himself as a species-being:

Man is a species-being, not only because in practice and in theory he adopts the species (his own as well as those of other things) as his object, but - and this is only another way of expressing it - also because he treats himself as the actual living species; because he treats himself as a *universal* and therefore a free being....

In creating a *world of objects* by his practical activity, in his *work* upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species-being, i.e., as a being that treats the species as its own essential being, or that treats itself as a species-being.... An animal forms objects only in accordance with the standard and the need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species, and knows how to apply everywhere the inherent standard to the object. Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty.

It is just in his work upon the objective world, therefore, that man really proves himself to be a *species-being*. This production is his active species-life. Through this production, nature appears as *his* work and his reality. The object of labour is, therefore, the *objectification of man's species-life*: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created. In tearing away from man the object of production, therefore, estranged labour tears from his *species-life*, his real objectivity as a member of the species, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken away from him.

Similarly, in degrading spontaneous, free activity to a means, estranged labour makes man's species-life a means to his physical existence. The consciousness which man has of his species is thus transformed that species-life becomes for him a means.

Estranged labor thus turns man's species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being *alien* to him, into a *means* for his *individual* existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his *human* aspect.⁴⁴

Finally, the ultimate result of the previous three aspects of alienation can be seen in the alienation of man from other human beings:

An immediate consequence of the fact that man is estranged from the product of his labour, from his life activity, from his species-being is the *estrangement of man from man*.... The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man stands to himself, is realized only in the relationship in which a man stands to other men. Hence

within the relationship of estranged labour each man views the other in accordance with the standard and the relationship in which he finds himself as a worker.⁴⁵

In this alienated state, of course, man's view of himself is that he is a commodity. His life activity is a commodity to be bought and sold. His life activity is therefore not an end, but merely a means to continue living physically. And as we have seen, the feature that distinguishes a useful physical object that is not a commodity from one that is a commodity is merely that the latter is the symbol for a social abstraction. Therefore, in capitalism, one individual sees another as a commodity, as the physical symbol of an abstraction, purely as means to be exchanged for the sake of continued existence.

The exchange value of a commodity is purely a mental abstraction symbolized by the actual, physically existing thing or person. And the higher-level abstraction of exchange value generally (as opposed to the exchange value of a particular thing) is money. It is an abstraction of abstractions.

Thus, when individuals are seen as commodities, all real human qualities come to appear as merely so many concrete aspects of exchange value generally, or of money. Other individuals appear to me only as so many commodities which I can buy if I have the money. And my own powers, i.e. my essential being, appear to be defined by the amount of money I possess:

The extent of the power of [my] money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my - the possessor's - properties and essential powers. Thus, what I *am* and *am capable of* is by no means determined by my individuality. I *am* ugly, but I can buy for myself the *most beautiful* of women. Therefore, I am not *ugly*, for the effect of *ugliness* - its deterrent power - is nullified by money. I, according to my individual characteristics, am *lame*, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore, I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honoured, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good. Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am *brainless*, but money is the *real brain* of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has power over the clever not more clever than the clever? Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary?

The distorting and confounding of all human and natural qualities, the fraternisation of impossibilities - the *divine* power of money - lies in its *character* as men's estranged, alienating and self-disposing species-nature. Money is the alienated ability of mankind.⁴⁶

Money is thus alienated human power and not truly human power. Ultimately its possessor (the capitalist) is privileged over the worker in a more limited way than appears in the illusion that money is real human power. The worker's very capacity to continue living, to continue to satisfy his animal needs of food, clothing and protection from the elements is always uncertain and precarious in capitalism. He must continuously find a buyer for his commodity labor power. And given the fact that a substantial proportion of the working class is always unemployed and that this proportion increases dramatically during the periodically recurring business crises of capitalism, the worker's ability to provide himself and his family with the means of mere physical existence must, for most workers, always remain precarious. Moreover, even when the worker successfully sells his labor power, his wage generally provides for only the most modest, socially defined subsistence.

The capitalist, however, always enjoys any quantity and quality that he desires of the physical amenities necessary for his animal functions. His money gives him all the powers he could desire

for his animal existence. He can have any dwelling, any amount of food, of transportation, of clothing, of human objects from which to get sexual gratification.

But money is alienated human powers. The satisfaction of uniquely human needs (those needs which elevate the human above the animal) with the use of money is an illusory satisfaction because it does not involve the corresponding development of uniquely human powers within the individual. In Marx's words:

Assume *man* to be *man* and his relation to the world to be a human one: then you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc. If you want to enjoy art, you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you want to exercise influence over other people, you must be a person with a stimulating and encouraging effect on other people. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a *specific expression*, corresponding to the object of your will, of your *real individual life*. If you love without evoking love in return - that is, if your loving as loving does not produce reciprocal love, if through a *living expression* of yourself as a loving person you do not make yourself a *beloved one*, then your love is impotent - a misfortune.⁴⁷

Marx's analysis of capitalist private property rights was a crucially important part of his general efforts to help to create a truly human society in which "you can exchange love only for love, trust for trust, etc." Only in such a society can human liberation and human development take place. Only when social and economic interdependences are freely and equally controlled by the interdependent producers can an individual be said to be free and independent. Dependence is personal and private - and results from private property rights. Human independence does not mean human isolation; it presupposes social interdependence but is incompatible with private dependence:

A *being* only considers himself independent when he stands on his own feet; and he only stands on his own feet when he owes his *existence* to himself. A man who lives by the grace of another regards himself as a dependent being. But I live completely by the grace of another if I owe him not only the maintenance of my life, but if he has, moreover, *created* my life. When it is not my own creation, my life has necessarily a source of this kind outside of it.⁴⁸

Thus, the widespread "Marxist" notion that capitalist society deterministically creates the human being as an "alienated capitalist man," while the task of a victorious Communist party or Communist government is to recreate man as a "socialist man" would have been repugnant to Marx. In the "Theses on Feuerbach" he wrote:

The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances and that the educator must himself be educated. Hence, this doctrine is bound to divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.⁴⁹

This seems to be precisely how many Marxists view the relation between the "vanguard party" or the Communist government and the rest of society. In addressing the question of whether man did not always need a superior, higher being or person to create him, Marx answered:

Your question is itself a product of abstraction. Ask yourself how you arrived at that question. Ask yourself whether your question is not posed from a standpoint to which I cannot reply, because it is wrongly put.... When you ask about the creation of nature and man, you are abstracting, in so doing, from man and nature. You postulate them as *non-existent*, and yet you want me to prove them to you as *existing*. Now I say to you: Give up

your abstraction and you will also give up your question. Or if you want to hold on to your abstraction, then be consistent, and if you think of men and nature as *non-existent*, then think of yourself as non-existent, for you too are surely nature and man. Don't think, don't ask me, for as soon as you think and ask, your *abstraction* from the existence of nature and man has no meaning. Or are you such an egotist that you conceive everything as nothing, and yet want yourself to exist?...

But since for the socialist man the *entire so-called* history of the world is nothing but the creation of man through human labour,... since the *real existence* of man and nature has become evident in practice, through sense experience, because man has thus become evident for man as the being of nature, and nature for man as the being of man, the question about an *alien* being, about a being above nature and man - a question which implies the admission of the unreality of nature and man - has become impossible in practice.⁵⁰

The relevance of this quotation to those "Marxist" notions of the Party or the Communist government as the creators of socialist man should be apparent. Marx was genuinely radical. He was the enemy of any coercive molding or making of man by other men in "higher positions," whatever ideology they might espouse. He was a champion of the most fundamental human liberation. To him capitalism seemed to be the principal obstacle to human emancipation. While capitalism continues to play the same role it did in Marx's time, today it has competitors.

FOOTNOTES

1 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (London: Penguin Books, 1973), p. 491.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 485-486.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 490.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 485.

6 Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), part III, p. 518.

7 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Collected Works (MECW)* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), Vol. 3, pp. 275-277.

8 Karl Marx and F. Engels, *The German Ideology*, *MECW*, Vol. 5, p. 42.

9 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 299-300.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 301-302.

12 Karl Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy," in David Horowitz, ed., *Marx and Modern Economics* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pp. 28-31.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

15 Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 264.

16 Marx, "Introduction to the Critique," *op. cit.*, p. 33.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

- 19 Marx, *Grundrisse*, *op. cit.*, p. 488.
- 20 Karl Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1961), Vol. I, p. 35.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 82.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 29 *Ibid.*, pp. 168-169.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- 32 Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 268.
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 271-272.
- 34 Marx, *Capital*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 583-584.
- 35 Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, *op. cit.*, part III, p. 268.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.
- 38 *Ibid.*, part I, p. 93.
- 39 *Ibid.*, part III, p. 276.
- 40 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-272.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 270.
- 42 Taken from the quotations from Luther's writings that appear in *Theories of Surplus Value*, *op. cit.*, part III, pp. 532-537.
- 43 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-275.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 275-277.
- 45 *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.
- 46 *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325. Precisely the same point is made in the *Grundrisse*, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-222.
- 47 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, p. 326.
- 48 *Ibid.*, p. 304.
- 49 Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," *MECW*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 5, p. 7.
- 50 Marx, *1844 Manuscripts*, *op. cit.*, pp. 305-306.