

Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction

Let us summarise:

The only ~~practically~~ possible emancipation of Germany is the emancipation based on the unique theory which holds that man is the supreme being for man. In Germany emancipation from the *Middle Ages* is possible only as the simultaneous emancipation from the *partial* victories over the Middle Ages. In Germany no form of bondage can be broken unless ~~every~~ form of bondage is broken. Germany, ~~enmoured of fundamental~~, can have nothing less than a *fundamental* revolution. The ~~emancipation of Germany~~ is the *emancipation of man*. The ~~head~~ of this emancipation is *philosophy*; its ~~heart~~ is the *proletariat*. Philosophy cannot be actualised without the abolition [*Aufhebung*] of the proletariat; the proletariat cannot be abolished without the actualisation of philosophy.

~~When all the intrinsic conditions are fulfilled, the day of German relevation will be announced by the crowing of the Gallic cock.~~

From: Karl Marx, *Early Political Writings*, ed. J. O'Malley (Cambridge University Press, 1994)

From the Paris Notebooks (1844)

[Self-Estrangement]

We begin with a fact of *contemporary* economic life: The more wealth the worker produces, the more his production grows in power and scope, the poorer he becomes. The more commodities he creates, the cheaper a commodity he becomes. The more the world of things increases in value, the more in direct proportion the world of men loses value. The activity of labour does not just produce commodities, but also turns itself and the worker into a *commodity*, and it does this to the same extent that it produces commodities in general.

This fact simply expresses the following: The object that labour produces, labour's own product, confronts it as an *alien thing*, a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labour is labour that has taken the form of an object, labour that has made itself into a thing; it is the transformation of labour into an object. The actualisation of labour is its objectification [*Vergegenständlichung*]. But in present economic conditions, labour's actualisation carries with it the worker's *loss of actualisation*, labour's objectification is the worker's *loss of the object and servitude to it*, and instead of appropriation, there is for the worker estrangement [*Entfremdung*], alienation [*Entausserung*].

So much is labour's actualisation the worker's loss of it that this loss goes even to the point of death by starvation. So much is labour's objectification the worker's loss of the object that the worker is robbed even of the objects he needs for both his life and his work. Indeed, the very exercise of his own labouring activity becomes an object he can get only with the greatest effort and the most irregular interruptions. And so much is the worker's relation to the object one of estrangement instead of appropriation that the more objects he

produces the less he can possess and the more he falls under the domination of his product, capital.

All of these consequences result from the fact that the worker relates to the *product of his labour* as to an *alien* object. Given this fact, it is clear that the more the worker expends of himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects he creates over against himself, the poorer he himself – his own inner world – becomes, the less he has to call his own. It is exactly the same as in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he keeps in himself. The worker puts his life into the object, but then it no longer belongs to him but to the object. The greater this activity, the more the worker is bereft of objects. What the product of his labour is, that he is not. So the greater this product, the less he is himself. The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it becomes *external to him*, independent, alien to him, an independent power that confronts him; the life he gave to the object confronts him, hostile and alien.

Let us look more closely at *objectification*, at the worker's production, and within that at the *estrangement*, the loss of the object, his product.

The worker can create nothing without *nature*, without the *sensuous external world*. This world is the matter in which his labour is actualised, within which it is active, out of and by means of which it produces.

But just as nature provides labour its *means of life*, in the sense that labour cannot exist without objects on which to exercise itself, so too it furnishes the *means of life* in the more particular sense of the means of physical subsistence of the *worker* himself.

So the more the worker by his labour *appropriates* the external world of sensuous nature, the more he deprives himself of the *means of life* in two respects: First, the sensuous external world increasingly ceases to be an object belonging to his labour, ceases to be his labour's *means of life*; and second, it increasingly ceases to be a means of life in the direct sense, i.e. it ceases to be the worker's means of physical subsistence.

In these two respects, therefore, the worker becomes enslaved to his object: first, in getting an *object of labour*, i.e. in getting *work*; and second, in receiving his *means of subsistence*. In the first respect he can be a *worker*, and in the second he can exist as a *physical subject*.

The peak of this slavery is this: It is only as a *worker* that he can maintain himself as a *physical subject*, while as a worker he is only a *physical subject*.

(According to the laws of political economy, the worker's estrangement in his object is expressed thus: the more the worker produces the less he has to consume, the more values he creates the more devoid of value and worthless he becomes, the more formed his product the more deformed the worker, the more civilised his object the more barbaric the worker, the more powerful labour becomes the more powerless becomes the worker, the more intelligent labour becomes the more the worker becomes unintelligent and a slave to nature.) [. . .]

The *direct relationship of labour to its products is the relationship of the worker to the objects of his production*.

[. . .]

So far we have considered only one aspect of the estrangement or alienation of the worker, i.e. his *relationship to the products of his labour*. But the estrangement appears not only in the result but in the *act of production*, within the producing activity itself. How could the worker come to confront the product of his activity as something strange unless he were becoming estranged from himself in the very act of production? The product, after all, is but the resumé of the activity of production. If the product of labour is alienation, therefore, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. The estrangement of the object of labour is but the resumé of estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself.

Now what does the alienation of labour consist of?

First, that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e. is not part of his very being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, feels miserable instead of satisfied, does not freely exercise and develop physical and intellectual energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. And so the worker only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when not working and is not at home in his work. His labour is, therefore, not voluntary but coerced, *forced labour*. It is not the satisfaction of a need but rather just a *means* to satisfy needs outside itself. Its estranged character is clearly evident in the fact that when no

physical or other compulsion is present labour is avoided like the plague. External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Finally, the externality of labour for the worker manifests itself 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 someone else. Just as in religion, the activity of man's imagination, of the human head and heart, operates on the individual as something independent of him, i.e. as an alien activity of gods or devils, so the worker's activity is not his self-activity. It belongs to another and is his loss of self. [...]

We have considered the estrangement of practical human activity, labour, under two aspects. (1) The labourer's relationship to the *product of labour* as an alien object with power over him. This relationship is at the same time his relationship to the sensuous external world, to natural objects, as an alien and hostile world opposed to him. (2) The relationship of labour to the *act of production* within *labour*. This relationship is that of the worker to his own activity as something alien and not belonging to him; activity as passivity, strength as weakness, procreation as emasculation. The worker's *own* physical and intellectual energy, his personal life – for what is life except activity? – as an activity turned against him, independent of him, not belonging to him. Here, *self-estrangement*, whereas under the first aspect, estrangement of the *thing*.

Now we have to derive a third aspect of *estranged labour* from the two just considered.

Man is a species-being [*Gattungswesen*], which means two things: first, that he has his own species, or specific nature, and the species of all other things as the object both of his practical action and of his theorising; and second (another way of saying the same thing), that he regards and comports himself as the actuality of the living species, i.e. as a *universal* and therefore free being.

Both in man and in animals, the life of the species consists first of all, from the physical point of view, in the fact that man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature; and the more universal man is, compared to the animal, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives. Just as plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc. form part of human consciousness at the level of theory, as objects of natural science or as objects of art – his inorganic nature as spiritual or intellectual, his spiritual nourishment which he has

first to prepare before he can enjoy and assimilate it – so too at the practical level they form part of human life and human activity. It is from these natural products alone that man lives physically, whether they take the form of food, heating, clothing, habitation, etc. In this practical order, man's universality is seen in the fact that he makes the whole of nature his *inorganic* body in that it is both (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material object and the instrument of his life-activity. Nature, insofar as it is not itself a human body, is man's *inorganic* body. Man lives from nature, which means that nature is his body with which he must maintain a constant interchange so as not to die. That man's physical and mental life is connected to nature means simply that nature is connected to itself, for man is a part of nature.

In estranging nature from man and man from himself, from his own active function, his life-activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man; for him it turns his *species-life* into a means to his individual life. First it estranges species-life and individual life, and then it makes the latter in its abstract form into the aim of the former, likewise in its abstract and estranged form.

For labour, *life-activity*, *productive life* itself, seems to man from the outset to be merely a *means* to satisfy a need, the need to maintain his physical existence. But productive life is species-life. It is life-generating life. The whole character of a species, its species-character, lies in the form of its life-activity, and free conscious activity is the species-character of man. [Yet] this life itself seems a mere *means to life*.

The animal and its life-activity are one and the same. The animal does not distinguish itself from its activity. It is *that activity* and nothing more. But man makes his life-activity an object of his will and consciousness. His is conscious life-activity and so is not a determinate thing in which he is wholly immersed. Conscious life-activity is what directly differentiates man from animal life-activity. Precisely by reason of that is he a species-being. Or, he is a conscious being, i.e. his own life is an object for him, precisely because he is a species-being. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labour reverses the relationship such that man, precisely because he is a conscious being, reduces his life-activity, his very *being*, to a mere means to his *existence*.

Man's creation of a *world of objects* through his practical action, his *fashioning* of inorganic nature, verifies his character as a conscious

species-being, i.e. a being that relates to the species as to his own being or to himself as a species-being. True, the animal also produces. It builds itself a nest, dwellings, like bees, the beaver, ants, etc. But it produces only what is directly needed for itself or its young; it produces only under the pressure of immediate physical need, whereas man produces when free of physical need and in fact truly produces only when free of such need; the animal produces only itself, while man reproduces the whole of nature; its product belongs directly to its physical body, whereas man freely confronts his product. The animal fashions things only in accord with the standard and need of its species, whereas man knows how to produce in accord with the standard of every species and to apply everywhere the inherent standard of the object; thus man fashions things also in accord with the laws of beauty.

It is, therefore, in his fashioning of the world of objects that man actually begins to affirm himself as a *species-being*. This production is his working, practical species-life. Through it nature appears as *his work* and his actuality. The object of labour is therefore the *objectification of man's species-life*, an objectification in which he duplicates himself not only in consciousness, intellectually, but also in working, practical fashion, in actuality, and thus he contemplates himself in a world he has created. By tearing from man the object of his production, estranged labour tears from him his *species-life*, his actual species-objectivity, and turns his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is torn away from him.

[...]
Man's species-being includes both nature, on which man's labour operates, and man's spiritual faculties. Where man's labour is estranged, this complex species-being is reduced to a mere means to his existence as an abstract individual. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual being: his *human nature*.

An immediate consequence of man's estrangement from the product of his labour, from his life-activity, and from his species-being, is the *estrangement of man from man*. When man is opposed to himself, the *other man* opposes him. What obtains in man's relationship to his labour, to the product of his labour, and to himself obtains in man's relationship to the other man and to his work and object of work.

In general, the statement that man is estranged from his species-being means that one man is estranged from the other and that each of them is estranged from their common human nature.

[...]

Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relationship he gives to himself and nature *vis-à-vis* other men different than himself. Thus, religious self-estrangement necessarily manifests itself in the relationship of the layman to the priest, or, because here we are dealing with the intellectual world, to a mediator etc. In the actual, practical world, self-estrangement can become evident only through the actual, practical relationship to other men. The means through which estrangement proceeds are themselves *practical*. It is by means of estranged labour, therefore, that man engenders not only his relationship to the object and to the act of production as things alien and hostile, but also the relationship in which other men stand to his production and product, and the relationship in which he stands to these other men. Just as he engenders his own product as his loss, as a product that does not belong to him, so too he engenders the mastery over the production and the product that is exercised by one who does not produce. As he estranges his activity from himself he engenders a stranger's appropriation of activity that is not the stranger's own.

[...]

Thus, through his *estranged, alienated labour*, the worker engenders the relationship to this labour of a man who is alien and external to it. The relationship of the labourer to labour engenders the relationship to it of the capitalist (or whatever else those having mastery over labour might be called).

~~Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence of alienated labour, of the labourer's externality relative to nature and himself.~~

~~Thus does private property derive from analysis of the concept of alienated labour, i.e. of alienated man, of estranged labour, estranged life, estranged man.~~

~~To be sure, we obtained the concept of alienated labour (of alienated life) from political economy as the result of the movement of private~~

Chapter 7: The Labour Process and the Valorization Process

1. THE LABOUR PROCESS

The use of labour-power is labour itself. The purchaser of labour-power consumes it by setting the seller of it to work. By working, the latter becomes in actuality what previously he only was potentially, namely labour-power in action, a worker. In order to embody his labour in commodities, he must above all embody it in use-values, things which serve to satisfy needs of one kind or another. Hence what the capitalist sets the worker to produce is a particular use-value, a specific article. The fact that the production of use-values, or goods, is carried on under the control of a capitalist and on his behalf does not alter the general character of that production. We shall therefore, in the first place, have to consider the labour process independently of any specific social formation.

Labour is, first of all, a process between man and nature, a process by which man, through his own actions, mediates, regulates and controls the metabolism between himself and nature. He confronts the materials of nature as a force of nature. He sets in motion the natural forces which belong to his own body, his arms, legs, head and hands, in order to appropriate the materials of nature in a form adapted to his own needs. Through this movement he acts upon external nature and changes it, and in this way he simultaneously changes his own nature. He develops the potentialities slumbering within nature, and subjects the play of its forces to his own sovereign power. We are not dealing here with those first instinctive forms of labour which remain on the animal level. An immense interval of time separates the state of things in which a man brings his labour-power to market for sale as a commodity from the situation when human labour had not yet cast off its first instinctive form. We presuppose labour in a form in

From: Karl Marx, Capital, Volume 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990)

which it is an exclusively human characteristic. A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [per-wirklich] his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. This means close attention. The less he is attracted by the nature of the work and the way in which it has to be accomplished, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as the free play of his own physical and mental powers, the closer his attention is forced to be.

The simple elements of the labour process are (1) purposeful activity, that is work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed, and (3) the instruments of that work.

The land (and this, economically speaking, includes water) in its original state in which it supplies¹ man with necessities or means of subsistence ready to hand is available without any effort on his part as the universal material for human labour. All those things which labour merely separates from immediate connection with their environment are objects of labour spontaneously provided by nature, such as fish caught and separated from their natural element, namely water, timber felled in virgin forests, and ores extracted from their veins. If, on the other hand, the object of labour has, so to speak, been filtered through previous labour, we call it raw material. For example, ore already extracted and ready for washing. All raw material is an object of labour [*Arbeitsgegenstand*], but not every object of labour is raw material; the object of

1. 'The earth's spontaneous productions being in small quantity, quite independent of man, appear, as it were, to be furnished by Nature, in the same way as a small gun is given to a young man, in order to put him in a way of industry, and of making his fortune' (James Stewart, *Principles of Political Economy*, Dublin, 1770, Vol. 1, p. 116).

labour counts as raw material only when it has already undergone some alteration by means of labour.*

An instrument of labour is a thing, or a complex of things, which the worker interposes between himself and the object of his labour and which serves as a conductor, directing his activity onto that object. He makes use of the mechanical, physical and chemical properties of some substances in order to set them to work on other substances as instruments of his power, and in accordance with his purposes.² Leaving out of consideration such ready-made means of subsistence as fruits, in gathering which a man's bodily organs alone serve as the instruments of his labour, the object the worker directly takes possession of is not the object of labour but its instrument. Thus nature becomes one of the organs of his activity, which he annexes to his own bodily organs, adding stature to himself in spite of the Bible. As the earth is his original ladder, so too it is his original tool house. It supplies him, for instance, with stones for throwing, grinding, pressing, cutting, etc. The earth itself is an instrument of labour, but its use in this way, in agriculture, presupposes a whole series of other instruments and a comparatively high stage of development of labour-power.³ As soon as the labour process has undergone the slightest development, it requires specially prepared instruments. Thus we find stone implements and weapons in the oldest caves. In the earliest period of human history, domesticated animals, i.e. animals that have undergone modification by means of labour, that

2. 'Reason is as cunning as it is powerful. Cunning may be said to lie in the intermediary action which, while it permits the objects to follow their own bent and act upon one another till they waste away, and does not itself directly interfere in the process, is nevertheless only working out its own aims' (Hegel, *Enzyklopädie, Erster Theil, Die Logik*, Berlin, 1840, p. 382) [Para. 209, Addition. English translation: *Hegel's Logic*, tr. W. V. Wallace (revised by J. N. Findlay), Oxford, 1975, pp. 272-3].

3. In his otherwise miserable work *Théorie de l'économie politique*, Paris, 1815, Garnth enumerates in a striking manner in opposition to the Physiocrats* the long series of labour processes which form the presupposition for agriculture properly so called.

*For the Physiocrats, the productivity of labour appeared as a *gift of nature*, a *productive power of nature* . . . Surplus-value therefore appeared as a *gift of nature* (*Theories of Surplus-Value*, Part 1, pp. 49-51).

*Marx thus uses the term 'raw material' in a technical sense, narrower than that of standard English usage.

have been bred specially, play the chief part as instruments of labour along with stones, wood, bones and shells, which have also had work done on them.⁴ The use and construction of instruments of labour, although present in germ among certain species of animals, is characteristic of the specifically human labour process, and Franklin therefore defines man as 'a tool-making animal'. Relics of bygone instruments of labour possess the same importance for the investigation of extinct economic formations of society as do fossil bones for the determination of extinct species of animals. It is not what is made but how, and by what instruments of labour, that distinguishes different economic epochs.⁵ Instruments of labour not only supply a standard of the degree of development which human labour has attained, but they also indicate the social relations within which men work. Among the instruments of labour, those of a mechanical kind, which, taken as a whole, we may call the bones and muscles of production, offer much more decisive evidence of the character of a given social epoch of production than those which, like pipes, tubs, baskets, jars etc., serve only to hold the materials for labour, and may be given the general denotation of the vascular system of production. The latter first begins to play an important part in the chemical industries.⁶

In a wider sense we may include among the instruments of labour, in addition to things through which the impact of labour on its object is mediated, and which therefore, in one way or another, serve as conductors of activity, all the objective conditions necessary for carrying on the labour process. These do not enter directly into the process, but without them it is either impossible for it to take place, or possible only to a partial extent. Once again, the earth itself is a universal instrument of this kind, for it provides

4. In his *Reflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses* (1766), Turgot gives a good account of the importance of domesticated animals for the beginnings of civilization.

5. The least important commodities of all for the technological comparison of different epochs of production are articles of real luxury.

6. The writers of history have so far paid very little attention to the development of material production, which is the basis of all social life, and therefore of all real history. But prehistoric times at any rate have been classified on the basis of the investigations of natural science, rather than so-called historical research. Prehistory has been divided, according to the materials used to make tools and weapons, into the Stone Age, the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

the worker with the ground beneath his feet and a 'field of employment' for his own particular process. Instruments of this kind, which have already been mediated through past labour, include workshops, canals, roads, etc.

In the labour process, therefore, man's activity, *via* the instruments of labour, effects an alteration in the object of labour which was intended from the outset. The process is extinguished in the product. The product of the process is a use-value, a piece of natural material adapted to human needs by means of a change in its form. Labour has become bound up in its object: labour has been objectified, the object has been worked on. What on the side of the worker appeared in the form of unrest [*Unruhe*] now appears, on the side of the product, in the form of being [*Sein*], as a fixed, immobile characteristic. The worker has spun, and the product is a spinning.*

If we look at the whole process from the point of view of its result, the product, it is plain that both the instruments and the object of labour are means of production⁷ and that the labour itself is productive labour.⁸

Although a use-value emerges from the labour process, in the form of a product, other use-values, products of previous labour, enter into it as means of production. The same use-value is both the product of a previous process, and a means of production in a later process. Products are therefore not only results of labour, but also its essential conditions.

With the exception of the extractive industries, such as mining, hunting, fishing (and agriculture, but only in so far as it starts by breaking up virgin soil), where the material for labour is provided directly by nature, all branches of industry deal with raw material, i.e. an object of labour which has already been filtered through labour, which is itself already a product of labour. An example is seed in agriculture. Animals and plants which we are accustomed to consider as products of nature, may be, in their present form,

7. It appears paradoxical to assert that uncaught fish, for instance, are a means of production in the fishing industry. But hitherto no one has discovered the art of catching fish in waters that contain none.

8. This method of determining what is productive labour, from the standpoint of the simple labour process, is by no means sufficient to cover the capitalist process of production.

* Spinning: a quantity of thread or spun yarn (*O.E.D.*).

not only products of, say, last year's labour, but the result of a gradual transformation continued through many generations under human control, and through the agency of human labour. As regards the instruments of labour in particular, they show traces of the labour of past ages, even to the most superficial observer, in the great majority of cases.

Raw material may either form the principal substance of a product, or it may enter into its formation only as an accessory. An accessory may be consumed by the instruments of labour, such as coal by a steam-engine, oil by a wheel, hay by draft-horses, or it may be added to the raw material in order to produce some physical modification of it, as chlorine is added to unbleached linen, coal to iron, dye to wool, or again it may help to accomplish the work itself, as in the case of the materials used for heating and lighting workshops. The distinction between principal substance and accessory vanishes in the chemical industries proper, because there none of the raw material re-appears, in its original composition, in the substance of the product.⁹

Every object possesses various properties, and is thus capable of being applied to different uses. The same product may therefore form the raw material for very different labour processes. Corn, for example, is a raw material for millers, starch-manufacturers, distillers and cattle-breeders. It also enters as raw material into its own production in the shape of seed; coal both emerges from the mining industry as a product and enters into it as a means of production.

Again, a particular product may be used as both instrument of labour and raw material in the same process. Take, for instance, the fattening of cattle, where the animal is the raw material, and at the same time an instrument for the production of manure.

A product, though ready for immediate consumption, may nevertheless serve as raw material for a further product, as grapes do when they become the raw material for wine. On the other hand, labour may release its product in such a form that it can only be used as raw material. Raw material in this condition, such as

9. Storch distinguishes between raw material (*matiere*) and accessory materials (*matériaux*). Cherbuliez describes accessories as *matieres accessoires*.⁹

⁹H. Storch, *Cours d'économie politique*, Vol. 1, St. Petersburg, 1815, p. 228; A. Cherbuliez, *Richesse ou pauvreté*, Paris, 1841, p. 14.

cotton, thread and yarn, is called semi-manufactured, but should rather be described as having been manufactured up to a certain level. Although itself already a product, this raw material may have to go through a whole series of different processes, and in each of these it serves as raw material, changing its shape constantly, until it is precipitated from the last process of the series in finished form, either as means of subsistence or as instrument of labour.

Hence we see that whether a use-value is to be regarded as raw material, as instrument of labour or as product is determined entirely by its specific function in the labour process, by the position it occupies there: as its position changes, so do its determining characteristics.

Therefore, whenever products enter as means of production into new labour processes, they lose their character of being products and function only as objective factors contributing to living labour. A spinner treats spindles only as a means for spinning, and flax as the material he spins. Of course it is impossible to spin without material and spindles; and therefore the availability of these products is presupposed at the beginning of the spinning operation. But in the process itself, the fact that they are the products of past labour is as irrelevant as, in the case of the digestive process, the fact that bread is the product of the previous labour of the farmer, the miller and the baker. On the contrary, it is by their imperfections that the means of production in any process bring to our attention their character of being the products of past labour. A knife which fails to cut, a piece of thread which keeps on snapping, forcibly remind us of Mr A, the cutter, or Mr B, the spinner. In a successful product, the role played by past labour in mediating its useful properties has been extinguished.

A machine which is not active in the labour process is useless. In addition, it falls prey to the destructive power of natural processes. Iron rusts, wood rots. Yarn with which we neither weave nor knit is cotton wasted. Living labour must seize on these things, awaken them from the dead, change them from merely possible into real and effective use-values. Bathed in the fire of labour, appropriated as part of its organism, and infused with vital energy for the performance of the functions appropriate to their concept and to their vocation in the process, they are indeed consumed, but to some purpose, as elements in the formation of new

use-values, new products, which are capable of entering into individual consumption as means of subsistence or into a new labour process as means of production.

If then, on the one hand, finished products are not only results of the labour process, but also conditions of its existence, their induction into the process, their contact with living labour, is the sole means by which they can be made to retain their character of use-values, and be realized.

Labour uses up its material elements, its objects and its instruments. It consumes them, and is therefore a process of consumption. Such productive consumption is distinguished from individual consumption by this, that the latter uses up products as means of subsistence for the living individual; the former, as means of subsistence for labour, i.e. for the activity through which the living individual's labour-power manifests itself. Thus the product of individual consumption is the consumer himself; the result of productive consumption is a product distinct from the consumer.

In so far then as its instruments and its objects are themselves products, labour consumes products in order to create products, or in other words consumes one set of products by turning them into means of production for another set. But just as the labour process originally took place only between man and the earth (which was available independently of any human action), so even now we still employ in the process many means of production which are provided directly by nature and do not represent any combination of natural substances with human labour.

The labour process, as we have just presented it in its simple and abstract elements, is purposeful activity aimed at the production of use-values. It is an appropriation of what exists in nature for the requirements of man. It is the universal condition for the metabolic interaction [*Stoffwechsel*] between man and nature, the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence, and it is therefore independent of every form of that existence, or rather it is common to all forms of society in which human beings live. We did not, therefore, have to present the worker in his relationship with other workers; it was enough to present man and his labour on one side, nature and its materials on the other. The taste of porridge does not tell us who grew the oats, and the process we have presented does not reveal the conditions under which it takes place, whether it is happening under the slave-owner's brutal lash or the anxious eye of the capitalist, whether Cincinnatus undertakes it in

tilting his couple of acres,* or a savage, when he lays low a wild beast with a stone.¹⁰

Let us now return to our would-be capitalist. We left him just after he had purchased, in the open market, all the necessary factors of the labour process; its objective factors, the means of production, as well as its personal factor, labour-power. With the keen eye of an expert, he has selected the means of production and the kind of labour-power best adapted to his particular trade, be it spinning, bootmaking or any other kind. He then proceeds to consume the commodity, the labour-power he has just bought, i.e. he causes the worker, the bearer of that labour-power, to consume the means of production by his labour. The general character of the labour process is evidently not changed by the fact that the worker works for the capitalist instead of for himself; moreover, the particular methods and operations employed in bootmaking or spinning are not immediately altered by the intervention of the capitalist. He must begin by taking the labour-power as he finds it in the market, and consequently he must be satisfied with the kind of labour which arose in a period when there were as yet no capitalists. The transformation of the mode of production itself which results from the subordination of labour to capital can only occur later on, and we shall therefore deal with it in a later chapter.

The labour process, when it is the process by which the capitalist consumes labour-power, exhibits two characteristic phenomena.

First, the worker works under the control of the capitalist to whom his labour belongs; the capitalist takes good care that the work is done in a proper manner, and the means of production are applied directly to the purpose, so that the raw material is not wasted, and the instruments of labour are spared, i.e. only worn to the extent necessitated by their use in the work.

10. By a wonderful feat of logical acumen, Colonel Torrens has discovered, in this stone of the savage, the origin of capital. 'In the first stone which the savage flings at the wild animal he pursues, in the first stick that he seizes to strike down the fruit which hangs above his reach, we see the appropriation of one article for the purpose of aiding in the acquisition of another, and thus discover the origin of capital' (R. Torrens, *An Essay on the Production of Wealth*, etc., pp. 70-71). No doubt this 'first stick' [*Stock*] would also explain why 'stock' in English is synonymous with capital.

*The Roman patrician Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (dictator of Rome from 458 to 439 B.C.) was reputed to have lived a simple and exemplary life, cultivating his own small farm in person.

Secondly, the product is the property of the capitalist and not that of the worker, its immediate producer. Suppose that a capitalist pays for a day's worth of labour-power; then the right to use that power for a day belongs to him, just as much as the right to use any other commodity, such as a horse he had hired for the day. The use of a commodity belongs to its purchaser, and the seller of labour-power, by giving his labour, does no more, in reality, than part with the use-value he has sold. From the instant he steps into the workshop, the use-value of his labour-power and therefore also its use, which is labour, belongs to the capitalist. By the purchase of labour-power, the capitalist incorporates labour, as a living agent of fermentation, into the lifeless constituents of the product, which also belong to him. From his point of view, the labour process is nothing more than the consumption of the commodity purchased, i.e. of labour-power; but he can consume this labour-power only by adding the means of production to it. The labour process is a process between things the capitalist has purchased, things which belong to him. Thus the product of this process belongs to him just as much as the wine which is the product of the process of fermentation going on in his cellar.¹¹

11. 'Products are appropriated before they are transformed into capital; this transformation does not withdraw them from that appropriation; (Cherbuliez, *Richesse ou pauvreté*, Paris, 1841, p. 54). 'The proletarian, by selling his labour for a definite quantity of the means of subsistence (*appropriation*),^{*} renounces all claim to a share in the product. The products continue to be appropriated as before; this is in no way altered by the bargain we have mentioned. The product belongs exclusively to the capitalist, who supplied the raw materials and the *appropriation*. This follows rigorously from the law of appropriation, a law whose fundamental principle was the exact opposite, namely that every worker has an exclusive right to the ownership of what he produces' (ibid., p. 58). 'When the labourer receives wages for their labour... the capitalist is then the owner not of the capital only' (i.e. the means of production) 'but of the labour also. If what is paid as wages is included, as it commonly is, in the term capital, it is absurd to talk of labour separately from capital. The word capital as thus employed includes labour and capital both' (James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, London, 1821, pp. 70-71).

^{*}See the discussion of Cherbuliez's notion of *appropriation* in *Grundriss* (English edition), pp. 299-300: 'The economists, incidentally, introduce the *product* as third element of the substance of capital... This is the product [as]... immediate object of individual consumption; *appropriation*, as Cherbuliez calls it.'

2. THE VALORIZATION PROCESS

The product - the property of the capitalist - is a use-value, as yarn, for example, or boots. But although boots are, to some extent, the basis of social progress, and our capitalist is decidedly in favour of progress, he does not manufacture boots for their own sake. Use-value is certainly not *la chose qu'on aime pour lui-même*^{*} in the production of commodities. Use-values are produced by capitalists only because and in so far as they form the material substratum of exchange-value, are the bearers of exchange-value. Our capitalist has two objectives: in the first place, he wants to produce a use-value which has exchange-value, i.e. an article destined to be sold, a commodity; and secondly he wants to produce a commodity greater in value than the sum of the values of the commodities used to produce it, namely the means of production and the labour-power he purchased with his good money on the open market. His aim is to produce not only a use-value, but a commodity; not only use-value, but value; and not just value, but also surplus-value.

It must be borne in mind that we are now dealing with the production of commodities, and that up to this point we have considered only one aspect of the process. Just as the commodity itself is a unity formed of use-value and value, so the process of production must be a unity, composed of the labour process and the process of creating value [*Wertschöpfungsprozess*].

Let us now examine production as a process of creating value.

We know that the value of each commodity is determined by the quantity of labour materialized in its use-value, by the labour-time socially necessary to produce it. This rule also holds good in the case of the product handed over to the capitalist as a result of the labour-process. Assuming this product to be yarn, our first step is to calculate the quantity of labour objectified in it.

For spinning the yarn, raw material is required; suppose in this case 10 lb. of cotton. We have no need at present to investigate the value of this cotton, for our capitalist has, we will assume, bought it at its full value, say 10 shillings. In this price the labour required for the production of the cotton is already expressed in terms of average social labour. We will further assume that the wear and tear of the spindle, which for our present purpose may represent all other instruments of labour employed, amounts to ^{*}'The thing desired for its own sake'.

whether the lives of wage laborers are rich and fulfilled or degraded and alienated. Of course it might be that self-actualizing labor and maximal profits are facilitated by the same set of productive forces and techniques; but in Volume 1, Part Four, of *Capital*, Marx argues in detail that there is no such happy coincidence, that it is just the kind of production dictated by profit maximization which has led to the alienating division of labor he describes.

Marx believes that far from being incompatible with the technical requirements of modern industry, the potentiality for varied, well-rounded human activity is inherent in modern scientific manufacture itself, and will begin to appear naturally as soon as production comes to be regulated consciously by the workers instead of being driven blindly by dead capital's vampire-like thirst for profit at the expense of human life. 'The nature of large industry', he says, 'conditions change of labor, fluidity of function, all-sided mobility of the laborer.' Every step in technical progress demonstrates this fact, by changing the laboring function required for manufacture, thus rendering whole categories of detail laborers (who have been trained only for one function) productively superfluous, and (under capitalist conditions) doing away with their only marketable skill. 'Change of labor' and 'fluidity of function' are not, however, inherently destructive or crippling. On the contrary, they represent precisely the potentiality for all-sided human development whose suppression under capitalism is a chief cause of alienation:

But if change of labor now imposes itself as an overpowering natural law, . . . large industry through its catastrophes makes it a question of life or death to recognize the change of labor and hence the greatest possible many-sidedness of the laborer as a universal law of social production, and adapt its relation to the normal actuality of this law; . . . to replace the partial individual, the mere carrier of a detail function, with the totally developed individual, fit for the changing demands of labor, for whom different social functions are only so many modes of activity relieving one another.⁷

2 Capitalism and freedom

One cause of alienation cited by Marx is the frustration or abortion of human potentialities by the capitalist division of labor. Another, perhaps even more prominent and fundamental in Marx's account, is the way in which people under capitalism are placed

in a condition of degrading servitude, not merely to other human beings, but even more basically to impersonal and inhuman forces of their own creation. *The German Ideology* describes 'alienation' as 'the positing of social activity, the consolidation of our product as a real power over us, growing out of our control'.⁸ *Capital* speaks of the conditions of wage labor as 'alienated from labor and confronting it independently', and of capital as 'an alienated, independent social might, which stands over against society as a thing (*Sache*)'.⁹

This use of 'alienation' is clearly an extension of Feuerbach's notion of religious alienation. In religion, according to Feuerbach, the human essence has come to be thought of by people as an alien (divine) being, which dominates them and makes them worthless (sinful) in their own eyes. The difference is that for Marx the human essence is not merely species consciousness but social labor; the alien being, the dominion and the state of worthlessness are thus not unhappy illusions but monstrous realities. In *Capital*, Marx makes the parallel with Feuerbach quite explicit: 'As in religion man is ruled by a botched work (*Machwerk*) of his own head, so in capitalist production he is ruled by a botched work of his own hand.'¹⁰

Under capitalism, production and distribution are not regulated collectively but determined by the interaction of independent individuals as private owners of commodities. This system, its apologists tell us, insures the maximum freedom of individuals to dispose of themselves and their property as they choose. Yet in capitalism, the large scale consequences of all this 'free' behavior, the market mechanism and economic system resulting from it, will fall outside anyone's control, and may react catastrophically on each or all of us in a manner which we are powerless, both individually and collectively, to prevent. This powerlessness is most noticeable in a trade crisis, when many capitalists are suddenly ruined, workers thrown out of employment, not through any natural disaster or any failure on the part of society's productive capacities, but simply by the social disaster inherent in the capitalist trade cycle. The alienating feature, however, is not just that the market system leads periodically to disastrous results. What is alienating is more basically that under capitalism human beings cannot be masters, whether individually or collectively, of their own fate, even within the sphere where that fate is a product solely of human action. As *The German Ideology* puts it: 'Their own conditions of life, their labor and with it all the conditions of existence of modern society, have become something accidental for them, over which individual proletarians

The two themes I have identified (alienation as frustration of human self-actualization by the division of labor and alienation as the domination of social conditions over their creators) are closely related in Marx's thinking. For one thing, Marx counts the division of labor as one of the inhuman conditions over which people lack control: 'As long as there exists a cleavage between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is divided not freely but naturally (*nicht freiwillig, sondern naturwüchsig*), man's own deed becomes an alien might standing over against him, subjugating him instead of being dominated by him.'¹² People are forced into stunting and degrading forms of activity only because they lack control over the social conditions which determine the way labor is divided. From this point of view alienation as frustrated self-actualization through the capitalist division of labor can be regarded as a special case of alienation as the degradation of human beings through subjection to their own creations. But from another point of view, this subjection can also be regarded as a special case of frustrated human self-actualization. The Paris manuscripts complain that under capitalism the worker's life activity is not 'his own activity', not 'self-activity' (*Selbsttätigkeit*) but is rather the 'loss of his self' (*Verlust seiner selbst*).¹³ *The German Ideology*, using a slightly different terminology, declares that the proletarian revolution will 'transform labor into self-exercise' (*Selbstbetätigung*), by 'producing the form of intercourse', 'the conditions of [people's] self-exercise will be produced by this self-exercise'.¹⁴

What does Marx mean by 'self-activity' or 'self-exercise'? I think at least part of what Marx intends to designate by them is a kind of activity or a mode of life which is consciously determined by the agent's own understanding and choice rather than being forced on him or her by alien external factors. I 'activate' or 'exercise' my 'self' when I exercise my essentially human capacity to be practically conscious of my humanity in my activity, giving the form of self-understanding and rational choice to the life I live, and making my plans and deliberations effective in shaping my life. When I do this, I 'make my life activity its own object', in that I bring that activity under my conscious control. At the same time, I 'appropriate' my own life, it comes to belong to me instead of belonging to alien forces which master me instead of being mastered by me. By subjecting human beings to the socially produced conditions of their labor, capitalism frustrates the exercise of these powers of self-understanding and self-determination, and

activity' or 'self-exercise' involves an affirmation of the value of human freedom, and belongs to a definite tradition of thinking about what this value consists in. Freedom for Marx is self-determination, the subjection of one's self and its essential functions to one's own conscious, rational choice. This concept of freedom, in such philosophers as Spinoza, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel, is given such names as 'spontaneity', 'moral liberty', 'autonomy' and 'self-possession' (*Besitzsein*). For these thinkers, as for Marx, freedom in the 'negative' sense, the absence of constraint or coercion on individuals, has value mainly because it provides the opportunity for the exercise of freedom in this deeper, 'positive' sense. Marx's adherence to this notion of freedom is explicit: to be free 'in the materialistic sense' is to be 'free not through the negative power of avoiding this and that, but through the positive might of making one's true individuality count'.¹⁵

In most modern thinkers before Marx, however, the conception of positive freedom is given a predominantly individualistic and moralistic interpretation. To be sure, they note that the exercise of this freedom requires the satisfaction of certain social (especially political) conditions. But they conceive self-determination itself chiefly as the inner volitional disposition of individual human agents, their mastery over their impulses and passions through rational self-knowledge and moral fortitude. Given Marx's materialist conception of human beings as socially productive beings, he cannot be content with an introverted, spiritualistic sort of self-determination. For Marx, true self-determination must rather consist in the imposition of human control on the social conditions of human production.

Marx often insists that social institutions and relations of production are not facts of nature but historically transient social forms which are the products of human activity every bit as much as wheat, cloth or machinery.¹⁶ He does so in part to give the lie to those who would defend existing institutions by declaring them unalterable; but his purpose is also to make clear how much is required if human beings are to have genuine freedom or self-determination. If social relations are human products, then people cannot be accounted free until they create these relations with full consciousness of what they are doing. Human freedom requires not only that people should not be (as Locke says) subject to the arbitrary will of others; it requires also that the social relations in which they stand should be products of their own will. To

recognize this fully is already to see through the sophistry which represents capitalist society as free because its relationships result not from coercive laws or the will of rulers but (apparently) by accident, from unregulated economic decisions made by individuals. As Marx puts it: 'In imagination (*Vorstellung*), individuals under the dominion of the bourgeoisie are freer than before, because their conditions of life are accidental to them; but in reality they are more unfree, because they are more subsumed under a reified social power (*sachliche Gewalt*).'¹⁷

Because freedom for Marx requires the conscious production of people's social relations, it is something which can be achieved only in community with others, and cannot be attained by retreating into oneself or by the exercise of one's self-determination within the confines of a jealously guarded 'private domain' in which society does not interfere. Yet Marx does not neglect to emphasize the complementary point that no society can be free unless it 'gives to each the social room for his essential life expression'.¹⁸ There can be no genuine freedom unless men and women have the opportunity to exercise choice over their own lives and develop their individuality fully and freely. Marx is the consistent foe of political repression, press censorship, and other such measures which curb the free development and expression of individuals. He has only contempt for any brand of communism which would turn the state or community into 'the universal capitalist' by imposing a uniform, impoverished mode of life on all members of society alike.¹⁹ There can be no doubt that for Marx individual liberty is necessary to a free society. But it is equally evident, to Marx at least, that the liberty proclaimed by bourgeois liberalism is not sufficient for genuine (that is, positive) freedom.

Human freedom can be attained only when people's social relations are subject to conscious human control. Therefore, it is only in communist society that people can be truly free, because human control over social relations can only be collective control, and only in communist society can this control be exercised by and for all members of society: Communism, says Marx, 'consciously treats all natural (*naturnwüchsig*) presuppositions as creations of earlier human beings, divesting them of their natural character (*Naturnwüchsigkeit*) and subjecting them to the might of the united individuals'. Only communist society can do this, because communist society will be a classless society, in it people will 'participate in society just as individuals. For it is the unity of individuals (of course within the presupposition of developed productive powers) which gives individuals control over the conditions for their free development and movement.'²⁰ Up to

now, the class character of society has precluded the possibility of this unity, and hence of the freedom which can be attained only through it: 'The apparent community in which individuals have united themselves up to now always made itself into something independent over against them, and since it was always a unity of one class standing over against others, it was at the same time for the dominated class not only an illusory community, but a new fetter as well.' Further, because individual self-expression and self-actualization are possible only through the capitalist division of labor, even individual freedom will become possible only with the collective human control over people's conditions of life:

The transformation of personal power (relations) into reified (*sachliche*) ones, . . . can only be abolished by individuals subsuming these reified powers again under themselves and abolishing the division of labor. This is not possible without the community. Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his abilities on all sides; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community.²¹

* Marx does not conceive of social control over the means of production as the exclusion of individuals from ownership of what they produce and use. On the contrary, it is capitalism which involves such an exclusion, since it delivers the means and objects of production over to a class of nonworkers. Communism, as Marx sees it, will be a system of 'individual property for the producer', based on 'cooperation and the possession in common of land and the means of production'.²² The means of production must be owned collectively, because in modern industry labor is directly social, and the disposition of the means of production is always an act affecting society as a whole. Such acts, in Marx's communism, will be performed consciously. Decisions about them will be made democratically, by society as a whole, and not by a privileged class, acting contrary to the interests of the laboring majority and subject to the alien constraint of profit-maximization.

Marx's critique of capitalism is based on some familiar philosophical value conceptions, such as self-actualization and positive freedom. But it is wrong to conclude from this, as some writers on Marx appear to do, that his denunciations of capitalist alienation invoke or presuppose a conception of a future communist lifestyle or future social arrangements, and 'ideal' of what human beings could, would and should be. Marx never describes future social arrangements in detail, and the main point he makes about them is that they are bound to change in ways we cannot now

writes to Ruge that any honest social reformer 'must admit to himself that he has no exact view about what ought to be. But again this is just the advantage of the new trend, that we do not dogmatically anticipate the world but only want to find the new world through a critique of the old one.' *The German Ideology* denies that 'communism' is an 'ideal' or 'state of affairs which ought to be brought about'. Communism rather is 'an actual movement which is abolishing the present state of affairs'. 'The workers', says *The Civil War in France*, 'have no fixed and finished utopias to introduce by popular decree, . . . no ideals to realize.' The task of the working class is 'only to posit freely the elements of the new society which has already developed in the womb of the collapsing bourgeois society'.²³

The plain import of these passages (and others like them) is that Marx does not pretend to know what the lifestyle or social arrangements of future society will be like. He evidently believes that these matters are dependent largely on the further growth of our knowledge, and hence beyond our power to forecast. Marx's desire to overthrow capitalist society is not motivated by any ideal picture of communist society, but by the real alienation and deprivation of people in capitalist society, together with the conviction that these conditions result from capitalist social arrangements. Marx views his task not as one of concocting 'recipes for the cookshops of the future', but rather one of identifying the historical tendencies and social movements which promise to bring down the outmoded society and point the way to a future in which people will enjoy more of such goods as self-actualization and freedom.²⁴ It is wrong to think that Marx's judgment that the victory of the proletarian movement will bring about a world which is richer in these goods commits him to having some more definite conception of what this world will be like.

3 Assessing Marx on capitalist alienation

The issues involved in assessing Marx's thoughts about alienation under capitalism are difficult and complex. I think in the end most of these issues are empirical ones, but this does not mean that they are clear cut or easily resolved. Any adequate assessment of Marx's views at this point would certainly take up far more space than I have already used in expounding them. Even then, I suspect, any assessment seasoned with the proper scholarly caution would probably be inconclusive. It is unlikely that anyone, in

social causes. It many people (the present writer included) do hold strong opinions, this is largely because the only alternative to committing oneself in practice for or against Marx would be to take no effective stand whatever on the social reality around us. In the present section I will try to identify (but not to resolve), some of the main issues raised by Marx's account of alienation as it has been expounded here.

Marx's account of alienation in capitalist society aims at substantiating three principal theses:

- (1) The vast majority of people living under capitalism are alienated.
- (2) The chief causes of this alienation cannot be removed so long as the capitalist mode of production prevails.
- (3) Alienation as a pervasive social phenomenon can and will be abolished in a postcapitalist (socialist or communist) mode of production.

These three theses are obviously interrelated. (1) is more or less presupposed by both (2) and (3). But (1) itself, as Marx understands it, is also dependent on (2) and (3), and on his grounds for holding them. In support of (1), a Marxist might cite widespread feelings of disorientation and dissatisfaction among people living in capitalist societies, or he might point to the preoccupation of philosophers, artists, social thinkers and popular consciousness with the problem of alienation, whether in an overtly Marxian or in various non-Marxian forms. But these considerations, however well substantiated, would not strictly show that alienation, as Marx understands it, exists in capitalist society. By the same token, a critic of Marx cannot successfully rebut (1) merely by arguing that people in capitalist societies are on the whole satisfied with their lives, even if a convincing case for this could be made out. Alienation, as Marx conceives of it, is not fundamentally a matter of consciousness or of how people in fact feel about themselves or their lives. Alienation is rather a state of objective unfulfillment, of the frustration of really existing human needs and potentialities. The consciousness people have of this unfulfillment is merely a reflection of alienation, at most a symptom or evidence of it. Marx's real grounds for believing that people in capitalist society are alienated is not that they are conscious of being alienated, but rather the objective existence of potentialities for human fulfillment that must be frustrated as long as the