

Marx: "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts"

in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, L. Simon, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Key:

M = Marx

[] = my comment

() = parenthetical argument made by the author

Editor:

these are the most well known remarks on alienation 54

some think this is young-humanist-Marx bullshit, to be corrected by the later, scientific Marx 54

others think emancipation and alienation continue as key concepts throughout his work 54

labor is the key, we are animals whose purpose is to make (*homo faber*) 55

but we are more than animals, because we are *conscious* of our activity, and can change it intentionally (and change ourselves) 55

we determine the nature of our being, our active species-being, through how we arrange our labor 55

the question is whether labor is alienated from the laborer and controlled by another, or controlled by those who labor themselves 55

in order to become a fully realized human, people must be in control of their own labor 55

alienated labor and private property in capitalism prevent this worker control 55

when we control our labor, we are in a position to make ourselves 55

Marx:

Preface

critique of Hegelian philosophy of law, morals, politics planned for other of M's works 56

political economy is the focus of this one [i.e. the State is not a focus here] 56

we need a positive criticism 57

Alienated Labor

the worker [and his activity] is reduced to a commodity in capitalism 58

there are two classes: owners of MoP and the non-owners (workers) 58

M does not take a state-of-nature approach [pace Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau] 59

M starts from the present fact of society/political economy 59

labor produces an object, which is alien to that labor 59

alienation [*Entfremdung*] between labor and product 59

alienation between worker and product 60

the more the worker labors, the more of his distinctive activity he surrenders to this alien product, the less he has for himself 60

and in the product his own labor confronts him as an alien thing 60

labor transforms nature as well 60

alienation between worker and nature 60

alienation between worker and his labor 61

[labor which for M, and this is very Lockean, *belongs* to the body of the worker, and that body belongs to the worker]

in capitalism: work, our distinctive activity as a species, is not affirming but immiserating 62
we feel at ease only outside work 62
work is not an end (as it should be) but a means 62, 63
our spontaneous activity belongs not to us but to another 62
our humanity is thus alienated and commodified and owned by another 62
man is a species-being, in that his own species is the object of his conscious effort 62
he considers himself to be a universal and free being [?] 62
free conscious activity [cf. desiring-production] is the species-character of man 63
we are different from animals: they are not conscious of their life activity 63
alienated labor makes our free conscious activity into a *means* for existence, rather than our essence 63-4
it thus alienates us from our essence as humans 64
we must remain in perpetual relation to nature (through our labor) in order to survive 63
alienation between worker and worker 64
competition for work 64
atomized individuals 65
under individualism, each is taught to see oneself as an independent unit, and thus each is alienated from every other, and each is alienated from his social embeddedness 65
alienation between worker and owner [either individual or corporation] 65
capitalist is alien power 65
domination of the non-producers over the producers 66
private property is the result of the alienation of labor (not its cause) 66 [i.e. (I think) a product can't be owned as property until it is alienated from its creator/producer]
so if we can de-alienate labor we can thus eliminate private property 67
raising wages while remaining within capitalism is just getting a better slave-salary 67
[wages would not be needed if we retained the fruits of our labor, so they are an avatar of alienation]
since human emancipation means emancipating us from alienated labor, then emancipating workers is emancipating us all 67 [in that sense workers are the universal class]
why have we created a system that alienates our labor from ourselves? 67
what would truly human and social property be? 67
private property is just the material, summarized expression of alienated labor 68

Private Property and Communism

goal: overcoming self-alienation, overcoming capital 69
communism is: the overcoming of private property 69
crude communism merely extends the condition of property-ownership to all 70
but that just extends to all the condition of alienation and separation from others 70
another phase of communism might be the State imposition of a propertyless society, but that is not an overcoming of alienation 70-1

true communism is the overcoming of private property as human self-alienation; it is the actual appropriation by man of his own essence 71
it is the genuine resolution of the antagonism between man and nature, and between man and man 71
it is the riddle of history solved 71
it is man returning himself to his human, that is, social existence 71

 this social existence produces man, and is produced by him 72
man is conscious of his existence as a social being 72
society is not an abstraction *over* the individual 73
 the individual *is* the social being 73
 and asserts his real social life as “generic consciousness” 73
we are particular and also, at the same time, we are the totality, we are the subjective existence of society 73

overcoming private property means man appropriating to himself his own full essence 73

 e.g. his organs are communal in form, not private, and when we share in the communal ability to see/hear/touch, the common aptitudes, each of us appropriates the common wealth to ourselves, we are emancipated by connecting with and drawing power from the common wealth 74-5
 [this is an attempt to summarize the gist of the (elusive) argument on this page...re-check before using]

the coming society will produce man in the entire wealth of his being 75
 the entire scope of his powers 76

sense perception is the basis of all science, so we are also wanting to socialize science as we socialize sense 77

 the science of man is the chief one (but also the science of nature) 77
we must learn to see the other human as need, as resource, as strength that strengthens me 77

 we are all of us dependent on our social context; we are none of us independent, autonomous, individual 77

 none of us creates our own life, it is a common, species-achieved activity in partnership with the earth 77-8

 all of world history is thus the story of the self-creation of man as a whole 78

a necessary phase of emancipation is the positive development of our sociality, rather than the negative act of resistance [to capitalism, the State, etc.], or the negative act of overcoming 79

Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General

M wants to escape the trap of Hegelian logic 79

 Feuerbach has made great strides 80

 showed that [Hegelian?] philosophy was an alienation of our nature, just like religion 80

 made the social relation of man to man the fundamental principle of his theory 80

 sought to start from a positivity that was itself, not a positive that results from the negation of a negation 80

M: Hegel found only the abstract/logical expression of history, not its actuality 81

Phenomenology

Hegel's Encyclopedia: begin with pure logic, end with absolute knowledge 82

logic, for M, is thought externalized, abstracted from nature and actual human experience 82

these thought-entities of H are alienation from the real bodies of actual people 82-3

for H we are debased in our *empirical, concrete* existence, and redeemed only in discovering the truth in abstract thought, so alienation from (what M calls) sensuous actuality is, for H, a good thing, though of course for M it is bad 83
this misconception of alienation is caused by H's idealism, of course 83
for H the true essence of man is in abstract thought, in the absolute Idea 83

[for M of course it must reside in material, concrete existence, but there is a fair amount of vagueness about how he conceives of essences, universals, generals, objectives that are rooted in the experience of the real world; i.e. how does the particular eye of a particular body become instead the social eye, the general eye? Or how does a collection of particular brains become the general intellect? see p. 74-5]

Hegel's goal of a self-conscious spirit is consciousness of the self, a self whose truth is the Idea of self 84

M: H is good at grasping man's *development* as a historical process, and understands that man is the *author* of this process; the problem is that H locates that development in the wrong place, in the realm of thought, rather than in the realm of sensuous actuality 84

labor for H key, but H defines it as abstract, mental labor, i.e. thought 84

H wants awareness of, reappropriation of, the objective essence of man 85
as material/concrete/particular beings, for H, we are alienated from our own Truth, the ideal/abstract/universal self 85
so the movement of consciousness must be the increasing consciousness of this Idea of self 86

we must reabsorb this unknown Idea of self by grasping it, we must transcend the alienation between our concrete existence and our abstract essence 89

discussion of the drives, the vital powers 87

since we are natural, we have a beginning, and a developmental arc 88

we can be aware of this arc and affect it 88

for M, contra H, knowing one's own self necessitates the suppression and transcending of religion [and the Idea] 90

for H, private right transcended is morality, civil society transcended is the State 90

this transcending is the process of history 91

for H what is authentic existence is existence as it is in abstract thought 91

transcending alienation means reabsorbing our objective being into ourselves 92

for M communism transcends private property by realizing that actual human life is man's property 92

this is a positive humanism, for M 92

communism is the actual emergence and realization of man's nature [as a social being?] as something actual [rather than ideal] 92

for M, H grasps man's alienation from himself, he grasps labor as self-creation, as man making his own species-life (and also alienating that species-life from himself) 92

[but H locates that true self that we need to recover in the wrong place (for M), in the realm of abstract Ideas, rather than in sensual actuality: H thinks an authentic human life, reintegrated with itself, would exist properly in the realm of abstract ideas] the knowing subject, for H, is the mind 93

our essence (and the process of discovering it) lies in consciousness 93

H locates our essence in universal fixed thought-forms rather than in our "rich, living, sensuous, concrete activity" 93

but for M these abstractions, these forms without content, are all sterile nothingness 94

in H, abstraction decides to establish itself in the trap of the concrete world [for M, H is right to recognize the *volition*, but he is wrong to locate the trap in the *concrete*] and in so doing alienates itself from itself, splits its oneness into many, goes from unified universal to multiplicitous particular 94

for M the abstract Idea is fixed and sterile, dead 94

it offers no life, no movement, no nourishment for man [no becoming] 95

H, as M describes him here, is eminently Kantian: a lover of pure thought stripped of all empirical dirtiness 95

H thinks spirit/mind/abstract thought is the truth of body/concrete existence; M thinks the opposite. [H thinks monarchy is the truth of democracy; M thinks the opposite] 96