Alienation in Capitalist Society

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Abstract

This paper attempts to study the roots of the alienation that currently exists in society. Alienation for this paper refers to the rift that exists between humans as we currently are and the potential that we can reach. This paper will attempt to trace the roots of alienation to the origins of the capitalist mode of production. In this, it will first deal with the "transition debate" and posit an understanding of the transition as something that brought about a drastic and qualitative change in social relations and the ways in which people reproduce themselves. It will attempt to denaturalize capitalist relations in order to truly trace the origins of the logic of capital. The paper will then delve into human nature. It will put forth a notion of human nature that is social and productive in order to understand some of the ways that capitalist production relations have fettered the growth of human nature. Finally, the paper will deal with alienation. It will trace the roots of alienation in some of the foundational tenets of the capitalist mode of production and discuss ways in which this alienation manifests itself. This paper ends with noting that alienation is inherent within capitalism and that in order for humans to achieve the same potential that capitalist production also generates, capitalism itself will have to be replaced with an alternate mode of production.

Foreword

My Area of Concentration that appears in my Plan of Study is the Alienation of humans to nature. The goal that I intend to achieve in my masters is to study the rift that currently exists between humans and nature. I intend to study that gap not in an external way such that more exposure to nature would solve the problem, but to dig deeper and study the causes of that alienation and understand some of the forces that exist to create and perpetuate the current relationship. Towards this broader purpose, my Major Research Paper will shed light on some of the ways in which the current economic system creates alienation. This paper will trace the roots of alienation to the origins of capitalism to attempt to understand whether the alienation that currently exists can be overcome under capitalist production, or whether alienation is an inherent element that comes with the capitalist mode of production.

1.0 Introduction

Human beings are creatures with a great deal of potential. Arising mostly from our consciousness that distinguishes us from other animals, we have the ability to think and plan beyond basic survival instincts and immediate gratification. While this has the potential to be a wonderful thing that should be cherished and encouraged to grow, this paper will argue that the current system (capitalism) that we are forced to live under acts to limit the amount of growth that is possible and even fetter the current state of human beings. This paper will not only show that the current form of capitalism is guilty of this, but will attempt to trace the root cause of why this happens. Marx uses the term alienation to describe this impact of the capitalist mode of production on humans. This paper will explore the origins of alienation and attempt to trace it back to the origins of capitalism. It will begin by studying the birth of capitalism to show the inception of some of the logics of capital. It will then delve into human nature in order to show how capitalism is guilty of suppressing it and preventing its development. Finally the paper will go into Marx's theory of alienation and pinpoint the specific relations that have been inhibited by the capitalist mode of production and describe how this has fettered the growth of human nature.

This paper will begin by studying the birth of capitalism. In this, the paper will try to trace the roots of the capitalist mode of production and show how capitalist relations are distinct from other modes of production. It will be careful to ensure that capitalist social relations are denaturalized and therefore traces of it are not seen in previous or other modes of production. This paper will show that capitalist relations have a logic that is radically different from other modes of production and therefore, in order for capitalism to begin, it would require a qualitative shift in social relations. This transition could not happen because of a simple increase and expansion of trade and commerce that was already taking place, but it would require a radical shift in social relations and the use of coercion to compel people to work. In order to trace and understand the origins of alienation, it is essential to trace and understand the roots of the foundational characteristics of capitalism.

The next section will focus on human nature. Alienation essentially states that humans are not allowed to reach their full potential and therefore any study of alienation must delve into what this potential actually is. This section will attempt to understand human nature from a holistic perspective and will outline some of the major thinkers who have contributed to this topic. There will be a focus on the productive and social aspects of human nature because of their dominance in shaping us. This paper will be critical of simplistic views of human nature that aim to simplify the complexity that exists within us to explain certain phenomenon.

Finally, this paper will delve into the theory of alienation. It will try to show how, from its inception, capitalism is a system that alienates the people who live under it. While the paper will acknowledge that capitalism has brought about some positive aspects, it will show how it has come up against obstacles that it cannot overcome in terms of human development. This paper will show that the increased wealth and technology that have come about due to capitalism has allowed for human nature to grow and progress in ways that was not possible in other systems, but that the economic focus of capitalism does not allow for this new found potential to be fully realized. This paper will show how, from its inception, capitalism created the conditions for a growth in human nature that it is unable to fulfil.

In endeavouring to show this link, this paper will touch upon a wide range of topics and themes. In the first part of the paper, in dealing with the transition to capitalism, the paper will not attempt to formulate a theory of the origins of capitalism, but will instead briefly introduce some of the most prevalent theorists on this topic and present some of their major findings. Although it draws above all on the contributions of Political Marxism, it will not be a detailed outline of any school of thought, but a presentation of the main themes and ideas that are present in this debate. In the second section on human nature, the paper will also take a similar approach. It will present a brief outline of some of the major thinkers in this field and attempt to reach an understanding that is holistic while taking into

consideration the complicated nature of human beings. The last section will borrow from a range of authors on alienation and show how capitalism has stifled human growth.

2.0 Historicizing Capitalism

2.1 Origins of Capitalism

In this section of the paper, the origins of the capitalist mode of production and the creation of the social relations necessary to accompany the transition from feudal social and property relations to capitalist ones will be analyzed. Various authors and schools of thought have contested this topic, but it is Marxist scholars who have contributed the most to the discussion and they have been the most active in the analysis and understanding of the transition to capitalism. Because of this, while there will be a brief introduction into some of the other schools of thought and the ways in which they have broached this topic, the focus will remain on the Marxist scholars and their interpretation. The Marxists, not surprisingly, are also divided amongst themselves into a few camps and there has been a very contentious debate around where, when, and how the birth of capitalism took place. An accurate account of the transition to capitalism is important for understanding the root cause of how capitalism came to be such a dominant system, and whose relations now appear to reach every corner of the globe almost without exception. In these accounts, the school of thought known as Political Marxism is one that I found to be the most convincing for many reasons, the most significant of which was its ability to denaturalize capitalism. This paper will not attempt to develop an account of the transition, but will instead draw on the work of others in order to present the key features of capitalism that lead to alienation and attempt to trace the roots of those features to the origins of the capitalist mode of production.

Denaturalizing capitalist relations is crucial because of the particularly distinct nature of capital and the way in which it works. There is no doubt that over the last four centuries the world has changed in a way that is unprecedented in human history. From transportation and communication technology to anthropogenic climate change, the world that we currently live in and the trajectory that has been

present over the last four centuries has been acutely distinct from any other period in human history. This uniqueness begs the question of how this exceptional situation came to be. I believe that the main driver of many of the drastic changes and the rapid pace at which they happen is the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, to understand how we came to this juncture in history, I believe it is fundamental to first understand how capitalism came about and the logics that are inherent with it. I think that the distinctiveness of Capital's drive is the primary reason for this hegemonic influence that capitalism appears to have on present day society. I also believe that Capital has a specific driving force that is unique and therefore warrants an explanation beyond simply that capitalism's "development is the natural outcome of human practices almost as old as the species itself, which required only the removal of external obstacles that hindered its realization". This is the definition of the "commercialization model" in the transition debate that will be expanded on in later sections (Wood, 2002, p. 11).

In order to understand capitalism as a system that is unique from others it is important to rigidly define what is meant by capitalism. In this respect, I believe Wolf does a comprehensive job when he specifies what capitalist relations entail in the following passage:

> The capitalist mode of production shows three intertwined characteristics. First, capitalists detain control of the means of production. Second, labourers are denied independent access to means of production and must sell their labour power to the capitalists. Third, the maximization of surplus produced by the labourers with the means of production owned by the capitalists entails 'ceaseless accumulation accompanied by changes in the means of production' (1985, p. 82)

He also notes the fundamental difference between wealth and capital which many of the other accounts of the transition do not consider. He notes that "wealth in the hands of holders of wealth is not capital until it controls means of production, buys labour power, and puts it to work, continuously expanding

surpluses by intensifying productivity through an ever-rising curve of technological inputs"(78). This formulation therefore creates a sharp contrast between capital and wealth and sees them as unique entities with logics that are inherently different. Wolf therefore contends that there is no such thing as mercantile or merchant capital and that in order for capitalism to be labelled as capitalism, it must be capitalism-in-production. Some examples of authors who conflate these will be provided in later sections, but it is important to note that these schools of thought do not allow for Capital and the social relations that are necessary to sustain it to be seen as a unique logic. They instead tend see them as an expansion of commerce and trading that was taking place before the advent of capitalism. The way these schools of thought naturalize capitalism will be addressed in coming sections in greater detail.

Another distinction that is very useful in its method of denaturalizing capital is the work of Karl Polanyi, especially seen in *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi, 2001), and his work on markets and the role they play in society. Polanyi's conception of the market and the change in its role within our daily lives is especially telling for an understanding of the transition to capitalism. Polanyi notes that throughout history, wherever markets have existed, they have existed in tandem with society; with society playing a very active role in shaping and controlling the role that the market plays. Polanyi uses the term "embedded" to describe the relationship between the market and society before the advent of capitalism. He notes that one of the fundamental distinctions that separate capitalism from alternative modes of organizing society is the "embeddedness" of the market. He contends that it is only within a capitalist mode of production that the market is no longer embedded into society. Here he believes that a stark change took place with the advent of capitalism. He notes that in historic societies, there often existed a market, but this market was subordinate to society. It is only within a capitalist economic system that society is "controlled by markets" (43-58). He notes that "[n]o society could, naturally, live for any length of time unless it possessed an economy of some sort; but previously to our time no economy has ever existed that, even in principle, was controlled by markets. . . . Gain and profit made

on exchange never before played an important part in human economy" (43). While it is important to note that this argument can be used to underline the importance of regulating capitalism, the general point about the market playing a unique role in the market still stands. Wood (2002) agrees with this notion and notes that this conception sees markets as a compulsion in capitalist society whereas it was an opportunity in previous methods of organizations. She believes that it is only when markets become a central organizing force around which society reproduces itself that capitalism has truly manifested itself. With these ideas as a foundation, the paper will now outline some of the most prevalent accounts of the transition and dissect them based on their ability to denaturalize capitalist relations and explain the process which allowed for capitalism to emerge.

2.1.1 The Transition Debate

In light of these authors and the drive to denaturalize capitalist relations, this section will outline a very brief history of the debate and the main players who have been active in it. Temporally, these studies range from explanations that date the origins of capitalism from over 5000 years ago (Frank & Gills, 1996) to ones that believe it to have come about around 200 years ago (Wolf, 1985). Spatially, the debate ranges from arguments that the transition occurred in the rural countryside in England (Wood, 2002) to some that believe that it was a global phenomenon whose origins cannot be traced to a single region, country, or even continent (Wallerstein, 2004). The debates also range in scope about the reasons that capitalism came about. From ones that argue that there was a crisis of feudalism that allowed capital to break the fetters and emerge as the dominant mode of organizing society (Marx, 1977) to those that believe that humanity has always had a penchant to move towards capitalism and that this is the epitome of human development, thus signifying an "end to history" (Fukuyama, 2006). The studies also range in scope as to the length of the transition. From some studies believing that capitalism emerged as the victorious economic model through a revolution (i.e. quickly) to others that believe that this process has taken thousands of years that has finally culminated in the form of

advanced capitalism that we live in today. This paper will begin with a summary of the ideas of the main contributors to this debate and their positions will be outlined so the reader can get a holistic grasp on the conversation that has been taking place over the history of this debate. The most prevalent way of explaining the transition to capitalism is known as the "commercialization model" of economic development.

Commercialization Model

The most common approach that is taken in explaining the transition to capitalism is the Commercialization Model. The basic premise of this model is that the development of capitalism is "the natural outcome of human practices almost as old as the species itself, which required only the removal of external obstacles that hindered its realization" (Wood, 2002, p. 11). The argument associated with this school as thought goes as follows: with or without a natural tendency to "truck, barter, and exchange" humans have been engaging in acts of exchange since the dawn of history. This process has evolved over time due to both technological improvements and the division of labour. In many accounts these two processes are intrinsically linked and therefore some of them have tendencies of technological determinism. These accounts, whether explicitly or not, tend to have capitalism as the highest stage of progress in human history. These accounts don't see a quantitative break with the introduction and spread of capitalist social relations, but instead see an expansion in markets and a growing commercialization of economic life as leading to the onset of capitalism.

A key point in these accounts is the role that the market plays. These accounts tend to see the market as an opportunity for people to use to their own advantage or profit rather than the market playing a coercive role in human society which compels people to act under its logic. Wood (2002) notes that in these accounts "the logic of the market remained ever the same: always an opportunity to be taken whenever possible, always conducive to economic growth and the improvement of productive forces,

always bound eventually to produce industrial capitalism, if left free to work out its natural logic" (15). This account of the market will be disputed in later sections of the paper in greater detail, but it is important to note that the market in these accounts, both before and after the onset of capitalism, played a similar role in society. Another troubling trend in these accounts is that they tend to see "traces" of capitalist development in many different modes of organization. They tend to identify capitalist relations in the merchant activity of "buying cheap and selling dear". This is closely tied to the conflation that happens between wealth and capital that was mentioned earlier. The failure to see the difference in these two very distinct terms leads to a theory that sees capitalist relations in many forms of trade and does not give credence to the fact that, as Marx put it, "Capital is a social relation" (Marx, 1977, p. 932) Finally, these accounts tend to often conflate the terms bourgeois and capitalist. In its original context, a burgher was simply a person of non-noble status who worked for their wage, but did not do manual labour or, to put it another way, someone who typically did more mental than physical labour. This conflation leads to proponents of this account of the transition to trace a linear path between the burgher and the capitalist. Wood (2002)notes that "in the slippage from town-dweller to capitalist via the merchant that occurs in the later uses of 'bourgeois', we can follow the logic of the commercialization model: the ancient town-dweller gives way to the medieval burgher, who in turn develops seamlessly into the modern capitalist" (14).

It must be noted that not all accounts that fall within the commercialization model succumb to the trend to see the transition to capitalism as a seamless process. But even in variants that see capitalism as a rupture of social networks and traditions, there is a tendency to focus on changes that have taken place in the forces and institutions that have "fettered" the natural evolution of trade as opposed to social relations or the role of markets in society. The biggest fault of the commercialization model is that it did not make a distinction between capitalist social relations and the rest of history (Wood, 2002). Its emphasis on the qualitative increases that came about within the transition leads it to an explanation

that, in fact, assumes as a given the very thing that needs explaining. It assumes that capitalism has existed in an embryonic phase throughout history and that when the barriers to pursuing the profit motive and improving labour productivity were removed, capitalism was allowed to finally break through. An example of this is in Heller's (2011) new book, *The Birth of Capitalism*. This avoids many of the pitfalls of some of the other accounts of the commercialization model and is explicitly about tracing a holistic account of the transition. But even here there is an underlying tendency to naturalize capitalist relations in previous modes of organization and trace the origin of capitalism to the removal of obstacles that previously inhibited it from sprouting. He notes early in the book that "Capitalism undoubtedly *broke through* in Europe. But we assert the existence of a non-European *proto-capitalism*" (3, emphasis added). This statement lays the foundation for a theory of the origin of capitalism as something that was present in the interstices of previous modes of organization across the globe and that once the fetters were removed, it was allowed to "break through" and establish itself. Although he acknowledges that it did in fact originate in Europe, and more specifically in England, the notion that there existed "proto-capitalism" in other countries shows the naturalization of capitalist relations that many other authors are also guilty of.

Within the commercialization model there are also certain deviations that this model can take in its approach and focus. One of these is the demographic model. This account attributes European development to autonomous cycles of population growth and decline. Supply and demand, in these accounts, is the underlying cause of the transition to capitalism (i.e. as population grew, demand also grew, making the feudal system obsolete). This account still attributes the emergence of capitalism as an outcome of the natural laws of market and therefore the "invisible hand" of the market is taken as a given. The world systems approach is also one that has gained a lot of traction among Marxists and the left in general. In this account, the development of capitalism is contingent on unequal exchange between a "core" and "periphery". This theory posits that the development of capitalism took place in

Europe because of the colonial trade relations that existed due to colonialism and imperialism. Europe (the "core") exploited its colonies (the "periphery") which allowed them to accumulate at an unprecedented rate. The colonies, while some of them more "advanced" than Europe before the transition, were unable to accumulate because of the uneven trade relations that were created and therefore were stuck in the mode of production that they had prior to the advent of capitalism (Brenner, 1977). A central tenet of this explanation is the role that the state played in European society. Europe had a fragmented state form and the role of the nation state encouraged competition and therefore stimulated nations to seek alternative ways to increase productivity. This competitive drive led to the capitalist breakthrough in Europe whereas states that were not in Europe were still fettered by age old traditions and customs or did not have the necessary drive to increase productivity. This method of explanation again falls into the commercialization model because its foundations are based in two of the fundamental characteristics of this account: i) capitalism is directly related to a quantitative increase in trade, and ii) when the fetters to capitalist development were removed, the capitalist mode of production emerged to fill the void that previous modes of production could not (Wood, 2002).

While all of these accounts are much more complicated than the brief summary provided here, the underlying themes and tendencies are outlined and telling as to the motivations and impetuses behind the transition to capitalism. Most of these accounts tend to see as a given the very thing that distinguishes capitalism from other modes of production and therefore do not see the drastic change in social relations that had to have taken place in order to bring about a capitalist mode of production. Wood (2002) notes that "the transition to capitalism in all these explanations is a quantitative expansion of commercial activity and the universal and transhistorical laws of the market" (20). This method of explanation, while it may shed light on some of the tendencies of capitalism, does not explain their origin. A simple expansion of commercial activity, I believe, is insufficient in explaining the drastic social, political, and economic consequences that the capitalist mode of production has had on society as a

whole. In order to truly understand how this system came about and how it has had the far reaching changes in social organization as it has had, we need to understand the inception of capitalism as a drastic rupture to social relations. This does not necessitate that this changed happen quickly, but there must be an understanding of the destruction of the old form of social relations and the creation of new ones in order to explain the unique system that is capitalism.

Marxist considerations

This paper has included a very brief introduction to some of the non-Marxist renditions of the transition, but will focus more on Marxist considerations because they tend to attempt to trace internal relations better and therefore address the root cause of the issue. Therefore, some of the main players in this debate and the views that they hold will be outlined in this section. As Heller (2011) notes, the Marxist method brings about a dialectical consideration of the events that transpired to bring about the capitalist mode of production, but, as will be shown in the coming sections, even this sometimes falls short and become prey to the temptation of the commercialization model (9). A key distinction that will separate many of the Marxist methods from each other is the role that the capitalist market has on society. The market here refers to gain and profit that is made through exchange and therefore is not a physical entity, but more a social relation and a mode of reproducing oneself and society as a whole (Polanyi, 2001). Wood (2002), I believe, has the most comprehensive conception of the market in its ability to bring out the unique characteristics that the market plays in capitalist society. Her distinction between the market as an opportunity (what existed in other societies) and the market as an imperative (what is unique to capitalism) allows us to view the market as something that is fundamentally different from the way that it functioned in any other mode of production. This allows us to uniquely categorize capitalism as a mode of production that is radically different from any other mode of production. This then allows us to treat capitalism as a systematically different system that emerged not just through an expansion of trade or an increased level of technological development, but as one that radically alters

social relationships and operates on a unique logic that is unprecedented in human societies. She notes that "a conception of the capitalist market that fully acknowledges its imperatives and compulsions, while recognizing that these imperatives are rooted not in some transhistorical natural law but in historically specific social relations, constituted by human agency and subject to change" is crucial in differentiating capitalism from previous modes of production (34). To attain this conception of the market and the impacts that this has on the origins of the capitalist mode of production, let us first turn to Marx himself to consider his points on this issue.

Marx on the Transition

A big part of the reason why there is so much debate on the transition question among Marxists is because in Marx's own writings there appear to be two accounts about how the transition came about. Wood (2002), again, does a comprehensive job of outlining these two accounts. She notes that the first approach came about in his earlier writings (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (Marx, 2012), and parts of *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, 1970)). Here he writes that capitalism arose as a result of a transhistorical process of technological progress where the burgher class played a leading role. In this view Marx sees capitalist relations in the 'interstices' of the feudal mode of production and it enters the mainstream when it 'bursts asunder' the fetters of the feudal system. The passages in this view can be seen to be a variant of the commercialization model where there was the embryo of capitalist relations within the feudal system and that capitalist tendencies existed before the rise of capitalist production. These tendencies were lurking under the surface waiting for the fetters that were restraining them to be removed to break through and bring about capitalist relations. This conception of the transition, like many of his other thoughts, changed as Marx developed himself politically.

The second approach that Marx takes can be gleaned from some of his later writings (*Capital* (Marx, 1977) and *The Grundrisse* (Marx, 1993)) where he critiques the notion of "the so-called primitive

accumulation". Primitive accumulation is essentially the accumulation that took place before 'commercial society' was established. Marx critiqued this notion because of the trend to read into this as the only necessary precondition to the onset of capitalism. The explanation of the origin of capitalism using the notion of "primitive accumulation" sees the origins of capitalism occurring out of a quantitative expansion of commerce as opposed to a qualitative shift in social relations of production. Marx critiques this notion and advocates for an understanding that distinguishes between wealth and capital and sees capital as a social relation as opposed to just an accumulation of wealth. This conflation can be seen in the account that Heller (2011) puts forth. Early in the book Heller states that "Capital existed under feudalism as it did in the slave mode of production" (12). This statement shows that for Heller, there is no difference between wealth and capital. This conflation of the terms also allows for him to conflate bourgeois with capitalist in the ways that were mentioned previously. This conflation is dangerous in a book that deals with T*he Birth of Capitalism* because it leads to an understanding that capitalism came about not due to a shift in social relations, but simply a quantitative increase in the accumulation of wealth or capital as he defines it. Marx, in his dialectical approach, sees capital as much more than just wealth. He notes that "capital is a social relation" (Marx, 1977, p. 932) and therefore it would be hard to see how this social relation could have existed under feudalism, much less the slave mode of production. Primitive accumulation is "so-called" for him because he understood that while the accumulation of wealth was a necessary precondition for the capitalist mode of production, it was far from sufficient. In order for wealth to be transformed into capital there needed to be a previous accumulation that occurred in conjunction with a transformation of social property relations. As Wood (2002) notes, "the specific precondition of capitalism is a transformation of social property relations that generates capitalist 'laws of motion': the *imperatives* of competition and profit maximization, a *compulsion* to reinvest surpluses, and a systematic and relentless *need* to improve labour productivity

and develop the forces of production" (36-37, emphasis in text). This shows that Marx, in his later years, had a much more nuanced conception of the transition that many authors have failed to grasp.

Marxists on the Transition

One of the most enduring and contentious debates among Marxists regarding the transition was between Paul Sweezy and Maurice Dobb. The central question between these two scholars was whether the prime mover in the transition to capitalism originated from within feudalism (class struggle), or whether it came about because of something outside of feudal relations (the development of commerce) (Heller, 2011, p. 23). Dobb argued that trade was "not in itself the solvent of feudalism" but that capitalism emerged because of the class struggle that existed between the peasants and the lords (Wood, 2002, p. 39). He suggests that the dissolution of feudalism and the subsequent rise of capitalism came about because of the liberation of petty commodity production that arose as a result of the class struggle. Sweezy, in his counterargument, contests that feudalism was very resistant to change and therefore the drive towards capitalist production had to come from the outside. With the growth of trade, there was a tension created between production for use and production for exchange. He acknowledges that this was not sufficient to bring about the capitalist mode of production. Sweezy believes that "[w]e usually think of a transition from one social system to another as a process in which the two systems directly confront each other and fight it out for supremacy" – but this was not the case in the transition to capitalism. It was a gradual shift that took place over centuries (seen in Wood, 2002, p. 40).

The basic question that this debate revolved around was where the prime mover that drove the shift to capitalism took place. Was it to be found in the "basic, constitutive relations of feudalism, the relations between lords and peasants, or was it external to those relations, located primarily in the expansion of trade?" (Wood, 2002, p. 38). Dobb believes that the prime mover for transition is the antagonistic

relationship between lords and peasants while Sweezy believes this came from expanding trade (one supporting and the other critiquing the commercialization model). While this debate brought a great deal of attention and careful scholarship to the transition question among Marxists, they both had several shortcomings that made these accounts of the transition fall into similar traps that non-Marxists had fallen prey to. To begin with, both authors believed that there was the embryo of capitalist relations within feudalism. While they acknowledge that there was a rift that was created in social relations, their portrayals of the transition are still predicated on aspects of capitalist social relations existing within feudalism. In addition to this, they both have a trans-historical view of the market and see it as playing a similar role within both capitalism and feudalism. Also, they both continue to see the market as an opportunity, as opposed to an imperative that people were compelled to adhere to. This view gives the impression that the Yeoman more or less freely chose to go down the capitalist road once the fetters of feudalism were removed as opposed to the case that they had no choice but to adhere to the logic of a capitalist market in order to reproduce themselves.

Another influential Marxist that has contributed to this debate is Perry Anderson. Anderson posits that the crisis of feudalism was resolved by the creation of an absolutist state. In his account the absolutist state acted to centralize and concentrate the politically coercive powers of the feudal lords that were previously parceled and fragmented. He believes that this absolutist state was essential to the rise of capitalism and that this state was essentially a feudal one, but that it displaced upward the feudal coercive power that existed at the time. This shift in power served to break the unity between economic and political coercion that was characteristic of the feudal state. It also liberated the commodity economy and the bourgeois society that had existed in the interstices of feudalism to develop on their own terms (Anderson, 1974). Wood (2002) believes that this separation between economic and political coercion did not necessarily take place. She notes that one can view the monarchical state itself as a form of property that appropriates surpluses from the peasants in the form of taxes while the lord

appropriates rent. Another flaw with this conception is that the English state never experienced the absolutist state on its path to capitalism. When boiled down though, Anderson's thesis is still just a refinement of the commercialization model. The bourgeois, when freed from the fetters of the feudal mode of production with the absolutist state, developed and created a capitalist state (44-47). This position on the origins of capitalism still leaves the question of what took place in order to transform commerce into capitalism (wealth into capital) unanswered and simply assumed.

As can be seen above, the transition debate is a contentious one that has been taking place for decades even among Marxists. All the approaches listed above fall short in one critical aspect: they take as a given the very thing that they are trying to explain (they naturalize capitalist relations). These accounts either see kernels of capitalist relations within previous modes of production or see the advent of capitalism simply as a quantitative increase in the activities that were taking place before the advent of capitalism. Both these explanations do not see capitalism as a unique system that has its own logics, but instead sees it either as human society reaching its potential, or a gradual shift that has been taking place over centuries that does not require a unique explanation. They therefore do not offer a sufficient explanation of the drastic ways in which society is different today than at any point before. In order to be able to offer an explanation of the origins of capitalism that sees it as a different system operating on a different logic, one must be very careful to denaturalize capitalist relations. This simply means that it is very specific about what capitalist relations consist of and is careful not to see vestiges of those relations in other forms of social organization. The second area where I feel that a more holistic approach to analyzing the origins of capitalism will be different is in the way that it separates the internal and external relations of capitalist production. The advantage that this allows for is that the origins of capitalism can be seen to take place in a specific location and time, and it does not necessarily take every connection between time, place, and the external world as capitalist. Both of these points will be elaborated on in greater detail in the upcoming section.

A more holistic account

There is a school of thought within Marxism that keeps these issues at the forefront and presents an account of the transition that is very careful to denaturalize capitalist relations and therefore trace the origins of this system as a unique one that came not from a quantitative increase in trade, but as a result of qualitative changes in the social relations that existed. This account is put forth by the school of thought known as Political Marxism. These authors trace the root of capitalism to a very specific time and place. They believe that capitalism, as an economic system, originated in rural England over the span of the 16th and 17th century. This does not mean that they discount or take for granted other external processes that took place and their relationship to the development of capitalism, but this account does posit that we can, in fact, trace the origins of the capitalist mode of production to a specific place. The later spread of this mode of production is also addressed, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. These accounts are very careful to ensure that they do not see vestiges of capitalist principles in pre-capitalist societies. They acknowledge that capitalism is a system that operates on its own logic and therefore does not transition without social, political, and cultural rifts being created from previous modes of production. In short, this account shows that there was a qualitative change that occurred in tandem with the quantitative increase that took place to usher in the capitalist mode of production.

Brenner's account

Brenner's (2003) account is one that "focused on the varying configurations of social property relations that determined the divergent effects, in different contexts, of other factors (whose importance he did not dismiss) such as demographic cycles or the expansion of trade" (Wood, 2002, p. 52). He was searching for an internal dynamic that existed within feudalism that led to the advent of capitalism without presupposing an already existing capitalist logic within feudalism. Class struggle plays an important role in his account. He is careful not to insinuate that the class struggle that existed within

feudal societies led to the liberation of any impulses towards capitalist production and social relations. “Instead, it is a matter of lords and peasants, in certain specific conditions peculiar to England, involuntarily setting in train a capitalist dynamic while acting, in class conflict with each other, to reproduce themselves *as they were*. The unintended consequence was a situation in which producers were subjected to market imperatives” (52, emphasis in text). This analysis sees the market as something that imposed its logic on the producers who were simply trying to adjust to a situation that was changing over time. With the enclosures and other parliamentary changes taking place, the peasants were forced to rely heavily on the market to reproduce themselves. Therefore, as this change in the role of the market was taking place, peasants, in their attempts to survive, began depending on the market for almost everything which inadvertently set in motion a capitalist logic (Brenner, 2003). This account will be expanded in the next section which aims to briefly summarize the ideas put forth both by Brenner and the rest of the school of Political Marxism.

As was noted earlier, Political Marxism believes that the transition to capitalism took place in a specific place (rural England) and at a specific time. It posits that this took place not because capitalist imperatives were finally allowed to take root and dominate, but because the social, political, and economic conditions in England during the time of the transition were suitable for the inception of a capitalist market. The following sections will bring to light some of the unique characteristics that allowed for the creation of the relations and ethos that is fundamental to a capitalist mode of production. This logic would then expand because of the competitive pressure that is unique in scope to other modes of production. When the feudal mode of production came up against the capitalist one, the capitalist one tended to be more efficient and therefore typically prevailed over the feudal one. This is a very basic understanding of the way that capitalism spread, but it is better able to account for the global spread of capitalist social relations than other notions of its spread that posit that there were kernels of these relations in other societies that were fettered by social and political relations and therefore not

allowed to break through. The following section will expand on Brenner's framework that was introduced and show how the transition to capitalism was a unique event that arose in the countryside in England. This section will show how capitalism was not just an increase in commercial activity, but was a fundamental reorganization of not just the economic sphere, but social and political spheres as well.

2.1.2 Origin of Capitalism

As was mentioned earlier, England had characteristics within its social, political, and economic structure that made it well suited to bring about the transition towards capitalism. One of the characteristics of the English system that allowed for this was the unique role that the landlords played in society. In England, when compared to their counterparts in France, landlords owned a very large proportion of land and they also tended to own the best land. This allowed them a certain degree of autonomy from the political realm in the ways in which they could extract surpluses from the peasants. This meant that they no longer relied on extra-economic forms of coercion to extract surpluses, but could do so by relying on the leases of their land which were based more on their productivity as opposed to customary or traditional rates. This change in the terms of leases was paramount to bringing in the capitalist mode of production. The shift from leases based on customary rates to leases based on the productivity of the land made both the producers (tenants) and the landlords dependent on the market in historically unprecedented ways for their own reproduction[1]. This created a climate where they both had a stake in creating the conditions for "improvement" in the ways in which the land was used, and this was critical to creating the competitive pressure that is inherent to capitalism. This shows that in Brenner's conception of the origins of capitalism, the role that the market plays is central. There is an imperative

[1] It is important to note that while this account does see the transition as taking place in a specific time period, it does not see the transition that has an exact moment in which feudal relations became capitalist. There was an interim period where both methods of organizing society existed side by side, but because of the competitive pressures that are inherent to capitalism, it became the one that dominated. This can also be seen of the role the market played. There was a transformation that took place in the role that the market played in people's lives that took time to cement itself.

to turn to the market that is unprecedented and the particular social and political climate in England was ripe for capitalism not to break through, but for its logics to be birthed. The market is not seen as a result of the proletarianization that took place, but rather a cause for it and the change in the role of the market marks a fundamental qualitative distinction in the way that society reproduced itself (Wood, 2002, p. 60).

There are two further unique aspects within England that allowed for the birth of capitalism. The first is the role of the state. The monarchy in England was significantly more unified than the states of other European powers at the time. This unification took place because the fragmentation of political power by "post-feudal military powers, fragmented legal systems, and corporate producers who insisted on their autonomy" was increasingly concentrated in a central state (Woods, 2002, 98). This centralization laid the foundation for England to possess infrastructure that surpassed those of other European states. In terms of social relations, the unified English state made the role of the English ruling class distinctive when compared to their European counterparts. First the ruling class was demilitarized. This happened because the unified state in England took monopoly control over the use of force. This stripped the ruling class of their ability to enact extra-economic coercion on the people who were working their land. This led to the ruling class, in conjunction with the state, to compel people to work through strictly economic means. The second unique feature of the English ruling class was the concentration of ownership of land that existed in England that was mentioned before. A few land owners in England owned "an unusually large amount of land that was worked [not] by non-peasant-proprietors but by tenants" (99). This combined with their loss of extra-economic powers of coercion led landowners to compel their tenants to increase the productivity of the land they cultivated in order to extract more surplus.

This unified state along with a ruling class that was stripped of their extra economic means of coercing labour led to a restructuring of rent that is extremely telling of the new role that markets play in capitalist societies. While there were many different variations on how rent was set, one that was becoming more prominent in England was rent based not on tradition or legal standards, but rents based on market conditions. The price of land was no longer fixed based on any arbitrary standard, but was instead set based on the productivity of the land. This was backed by Locke's notion of "Improvement" which will be expanded on in the coming section. This new system of rent created a market in leases and was the starting point of the competitive pressures that are endemic to capitalism. Landowners would lease their land to the highest bidder and this created enormous pressure on the tenant to improve productivity in order to remain competitive and be able to renew their lease when the terms were completed. While this new method of leasing was taking root, it went hand in hand with an increased dependency on the market that is also endemic of capitalism. The new system of leases created a situation where both the tenant and the landlord were increasingly reliant on the market for their reproduction. When the rents were no longer based on customary traditions, both the landlord and tenant were now tied to the market and connected more to the price of the goods being produced (exchange value) as opposed to the functionality of the goods (use value). This shift in value system started in the English countryside and was very instructive as to the potential direction that society would take in the centuries to follow. The second unique characteristic that took place epitomizes this shift in value relations; it was the enclosure movement.

The enclosure movement was one where land that was previously held and managed by the commons was privatized. The enclosure movement epitomizes the transition from land being used to reproduce society (used to produce use values) to it being used primarily as a means to gain a profit (exchange value). This was again in line with Locke's notion of improvement that helped to usher in new conceptions of property. It meant the removal of old customs and traditions that interfered with the

most productive use of land. Improvement versus traditional uses of land often came into legal loggerheads, and when taken to the courts, judges often recognized the validity of the ethic of improvement and sided with strengthening property rights. Locke's notion of property is telling here. For him it is not labour that ends up being the source of value, but the productivity of property that is instrumental in his formulation. His view of property, with its emphasis on productivity and exchange value created in production, made his conception unique for the time. He believed that the labour that was put into improving the land served as sufficient justification for enclosing on it and privatizing it. He was critical of both the aristocrats who simply collected rent and the merchants who would survive by buying cheap and selling dear. His ideal was the new type of landlord that was created by the new social relations that capitalism was bringing about. He praised the industrious landlord who was constantly striving to improve their lands by increasing the productivity through either technological innovations or improved methods of working the land (Locke, 2001).

These two aspects differentiated England from the rest of Europe and created the conditions necessary for capitalism to begin. Temporally, in the quest to denaturalize capitalist relations, it is important to note that the origination of capitalism, while it did not happen overnight, was not a process that was drawn out over many millennia as some accounts suggest (Frank & Gills, 1996). When one attempts to trace the roots of capitalist social relations to many centuries before it actually existed, one is extrapolating capitalist relations onto other modes of production and therefore naturalizing capitalist relations. Another important aspect of denaturalizing capitalism is the understanding that capitalism wasn't a system that had "failed attempts" in other parts of the globe because of some political, social, or economic circumstance that fettered the growth of capitalism. In positing such views one is guilty of a teleological approach that all societies are heading towards a capitalist mode of production and that their drive towards this goal was hindered by some event or situation. One must be careful to see the development of each society as a unique combination of events that were particular to the social,

political, and economic system that was in place in that particular place at that particular time. Capitalism originated in the English countryside because of a very particular set of conditions that allowed it to emerge and then take root. It created a new social dynamic that is unique and qualitatively changed the way that the vast majority of society reproduced itself. A central distinction in the qualitative aspect of capitalism is the existence of capital. Authors often conflate wealth and capital and this conflation often leads to an analysis that naturalizes capital's logic in previous modes of production. It is important to make the distinction between wealth and capital in any study of the origins of capitalism to truly trace the inception of the social relations that are necessary to support capital.

As Marx notes, "Capital is a social relation" (Marx, 1977, p. 932). This implies that in order for capital to exist, it requires a social structure and relations that are specific to it in order for it to perpetuate itself. Wealth on the other hand requires a different set of social relation and has existed in many other modes of organizing society (including capitalism). Wolf (1985) sums up the difference succinctly when he notes that "wealth in the hands of holders of wealth is not capital until it controls mean of production, buys labour power, and puts it to work, continuously expanding surpluses by intensifying productivity through an ever-rising curve of technological inputs"(78). These characteristics that differentiate capital from wealth will be expanded on. The reason this is important in any discussion of the origins of capitalism is because the conflation of these two can be a major force in blurring the lines between previous modes of production and capitalism. This paper posits that capitalism is a unique system that exists on logics that are fundamentally different from any other that existed. This then logically follows that capital (the building block of capitalism) is a unique entity that is also unprecedented in human history. It is in recognizing this difference that the majority of subscribers to the commercialization model fall short in their ability to show the distinct character of the capitalist mode of production and the social relations that are necessary to perpetuate this system.

The distinction between wealth and capital is extremely important to differentiate between commerce and capitalism. While both of these methods of exchange require a market, commerce is based simply on trade while there is a very different logic at play in capitalism. Trade in this context is simply the exchange of reciprocal requirements. This can be done both as a means to reproduce oneself in order to get what one is lacking or it can be done with the pursuit of profit. When one is trading with the intention of profiting from the exchange, the profit is usually gained by "buying cheap and selling dear". This method of exchange has taken place for many centuries and while it created a class of people (merchants) who made their livelihood through this, it did not create any systematic compulsion to alter the mode of production. The merchants who partook in this form of trade typically took advantage of geographic differences between places where they would buy and sell their products. In this mode of exchanging goods, circulation was the process that merchants drew their profits from. This meant that the low costs of grain production in the areas where it was produced did not produce competitive pressures on the wealthy states where it was imported and consumed. Therefore trading advantages that were gained during this time did not depend on production relations but on extra economic advantages like superior shipping, monopoly privileges, or elaborate commercial networks. This economy also allowed for peasants to own their primary means of production (land). Those extracting surpluses did not gain by taking ownership of the land or through dispossessing the peasants of their ability to reproduce themselves, but instead would only have to rely on extra economic forms of coercion to expropriate surpluses that were created (Wood, 2002, pp. 65–76). These features of a society that relied on trade without capitalism could not exist within capitalist social relations. This is important to realize in our attempt to denaturalize capitalism.

The groundwork has been laid now to show the unique characteristics that England possessed that allowed for capitalism to originate there. Next, this paper will outline some of the major characteristics about the capitalist mode of production that allows us to differentiate it from other modes of organizing

society. The two unique aspects of capitalism that this paper will focus on are the role of the market and the notion of private property. The first aspect of capitalism that is unique is the role that the market plays. While markets have existed in previous modes of production, it has taken on a unique role in capitalism. Within capitalism, people are dependent on the market for their survival. Those who don't own the means of their own reproduction need to sell their labour on the market in order to earn money that they can then use to buy commodities (again, on the market) to reproduce themselves. This occurs tangentially with the capitalists depending on the market to get the labour that they need in order to produce commodities that they then sell on the market. This new dependency on the market brings to the forefront elements of society that, while they might have existed in the background in previous modes of organization, become imperatives that the vast majority of the population have no choice but to succumb to. These elements are: "the imperatives of competition, accumulation, and profit maximization, and hence a constant and systematic need to develop the productive forces" (Wood, 2002, p. 92). This new role that the market plays in society is drastically different from the way in which the market operated historically. As Polanyi (2001) notes, historically markets have been embedded in society and have been an opportunity for people to gain access to the things that they did not produce themselves. With the advent of the capitalist market, the market became a compulsion that forced people to adhere to its particular logic in order to survive. The market was no longer something that people willingly chose to trade in, but became something that was impossible to live without. This change in the role of the market is unique to capitalism and is a central tenet to the capitalist mode of production. This new dependence on the market was, in large part, brought about by the new conceptions of property that were being adopted at the time. This shift in the role of the market signalled not just a quantitative increase in the activity that took place within the sphere of the market, but a qualitative shift in the role that the market played in society. It was not just that the markets became bigger and therefore made room for capitalism to originate, but that markets took on an

unprecedented role in the reproduction of society and therefore created the conditions for capitalism to be birthed.

The second unique characteristic is the introduction of private property and its role in people's lives. Although people owned property prior to the establishment of capitalist relations, ownership was not as cemented as it began to be under capitalism. This was especially the case with land, the majority of which was commonly used and managed before the introduction of capitalist social and property relations. With the advent of capitalism however, land became privatized and the use of the land was no longer managed by the people who inhabited the area, but instead by those who held the property rights to the land. This meant that the most basic means of production (the land) was now privately owned and regulated and, as was mentioned earlier, not necessarily used for the reproduction of society, but instead it was used to extract the most exchange value out of it. This new notion of property also ushered in an era where there was a great focus on the notion of "improvement". This "improvement" was, as mentioned earlier, fundamentally tied to the role that markets played in people's lives. These two conditions set the backdrop for the introduction of capitalism that, as was defined earlier is a system where the capitalists own the means of production, the peasants are denied access to their primary means of reproduction, and there is a competitive pressure to continually improve output. This account of the transition however, is not without its critiques. This paper will now analyze one of the most prevalent criticisms that is levelled against the school of Political Marxism: the accusation that it is guilty of Eurocentrism.

One of the most prevalent criticisms levelled against the school of Political Marxism is that it is Eurocentric. Anievas & Nisancioglu (2013) bring to light some of the main propositions put forth by these critiques. They define Eurocentrism as having "four interrelated assumptions about the form and nature of modern development". The first assumption places the origins of capitalist modernity as a

result of developments that took place primarily internal to Europe. This causes the second assumption where the development of Europe is seen as a superior "core" while the rest of the world is seen as the inferior "periphery" that has no agency. Third, eurocentrist theories put forth a predictive proposition that the experience of modernization in Europe creates the mould that other societies will eventually follow to reach a "higher" stage of development. Finally they put forth that there is also a stadial assumption that is created. Here "endogenous processes of social change are conceived as universal stages of a linear development" (81-82). Anievas & Nisancioglu (2013) go on to note that counter to this,

> "the anti-Eurocentrics move within the main methodological parameters set out by the original debate, accepting an essentially 'externalist' explanation of the origins of capitalism by highlighting the spread of commerce and markets as the 'prime movers'. Nonetheless, what they have done, in creative and interesting ways, is to spatially decentre the causes of capitalism by moving away from the Eurocentric frameworks characterising both sides of the earlier debates" (81)

The critique that Political Marxism is guilty of Eurocentrism is a serious one and therefore the four critiques of Eurocentric thought will be applied to the school of Political Marxism to see where the theory falls short and how it can be adjusted to ensure that Europe isn't prioritized in any ahistorical way.

The first assumption that Anievas & Nisancioglu (2013) put forth is that the development of capitalism took place as a result of developments that took place internally. In this, Political Marxism is partially guilty. While it does trace the roots of the transition to capitalism as taking place at a particular place and time, it does not isolate its lens of focus to just that region. In this, Brenner (2003), who is often seen as one of the main thinkers in this school of thought, dedicates a large section of his book *Merchants and Revolution* to the relationship that England had with overseas traders and the ways in which this allowed for some of the necessary but insufficient factors that led to the transition. This study ranges from studying the relationship that England had with the rest of Europe and the rest of the world and the role that the colonial relationship played in bringing about the wealth that existed in England.

Therefore, while this account does focus on the events that transpired in England (because that is where the first instance of capitalist social relations manifested itself) it recognizes that England was not operating in a vacuum. It sees the relationship that England had with the rest of the world as crucial to creating some of the necessary conditions, but is still careful in its attempt to denaturalize capitalist relations to ensure that capitalist relations are not extrapolated to other parts of the world.

The second assumption where Europe is seen to be as the superior core while the rest of the world is inferior is one that the school of Political Marxism can hardly be found guilty of. This school of thought is extremely critical of capitalist relations and therefore accusing England of being the birthplace of capitalist social relations is not recognition of its superiority. With this, it is also important to recognize that while there is definitely a focus on England in the transition, the accounts and the ways in which other nations and regions contributed to the transition is not taken for granted.

In the third instance, Eurocentric theories are those that place a predictive proposition in which the experience of modernization in England developed in a certain way and created a mould that the rest of the world would follow. This is explicitly rejected in Political Marxism. The entire thrust to denaturalize capitalist relations is done for the purpose of avoiding this. In denaturalizing capitalist relations Political Marxism recognizes that each society develops in a certain way because of the internal and external conditions that exist. Capitalism is not seen as the pinnacle of social organization and therefore each society will develop differently.

The final assumption that Anievas & Nisancioglu (2013) put forth is that the "endogenous processes of social change are conceived as universal stages of a linear development" (82). Political Marxism avoids this in the same way that it avoids the previous assumption that Eurocentric theories are guilty of. The work of Phillips (1989) is very instructive in breaking down the way all these assumptions are not an inherent part of the school of Political Marxism. She studies the relations that existed between England

and West Africa and notes that even though capitalist England helped organize the slave trade and then colonized West Africa, it was not a relationship which forced the West Africans into developing capitalist social relations. She notes that there was an extremely important relationship that existed between these two geographic areas that was extremely favourable to England and that this was essential to the origins of capitalism in England. But she is also careful to note that just because capitalism was born off the backs of the relationships that England had with the Global South, it still originated in England. This process allows for maintaining the importance of the global relationships that existed, but still traces the origins of capitalism to England where it was birthed. It is important to note that the reason it is important to trace the roots of capitalism to England does not stem from any Eurocentric or orientalist vein, but in order to be historically accurate. The physical location where the first time capitalist relations came about was in England. While the relationship England had with the rest of the world was paramount in creating the conditions necessary for capitalism to be birthed, it was, in fact, in England that capitalist social relations (as understood by political Marxism) were first created.

While the school of Political Marxism traces the roots of capitalism to England and attributes the reasons why this happened to primarily dynamics that were internal to England, it does not see Europe as an isolated vacuum that is unaffected by its relationships with the outside world. It also does not use Europe as a predictive pedestal to judge the way other countries develop or see capitalism as the most advanced form of society that all societies are striving for. It does, however take the history of the transition very seriously and is careful to ensure that capitalist social relations are not naturalized and seen in other societies where the conditions for capitalism to be birthed were present. While it is extremely important to ensure that any account of history is not centered around and focused on European events, it is equally important to ensure that one is objective in their analyses of the events that transpired in history in order to ensure that the record is accurate. Chibber (2013) demonstrates the importance of this in his scathing study on postcolonial theory. He definitively shows that the school

of postcolonial theory, which was created to combat eurocentrism, was formed based on assumptions that were faulty and that the theories that have come out of that school of thought are historically inaccurate. Therefore a certain level of nuance is required in any historical analysis. While one must be careful not to see Europe as the centre of the universe, it is equally important to recognize that Europe had a unique role in the world during the transition and that this allowed for capitalism to originate from there. This transition to capitalism created new social conditions that paved the way for the development of new needs and wants by both individuals and society as a whole. The next section will deal with some of the ways in which this transition affected the people and the society in which it took root and the world in general as it spread.

Given all of this, the question that must be asked is how this theory of the origin of capitalism and the way that it has theorized capital is connected to the notion of alienation. While this will be explored in greater detail in the last section of this paper, it is important to note that the value theories within this school of thought are central to the notion of alienation. In this, the work of Knafo (2007) is extremely instructive. While this paper focuses on the labour theory of value and the way in which it can be interpreted using the lens of Political Marxism, the three conclusions that he draws are useful in connecting Political Marxism's interpretation of the transition and alienation. His first conclusion is in noting that value theory is not, as it is interpreted by some Marxists, a strictly economic method. The illusion that markets are solely determined by quantitative factors is itself central to creating the alienation that exists in the capitalist market. A more holistic understanding of value will be able to incorporate other, notably political factors as well in understanding and combating alienation (82-90). His second conclusion deals with the agency in contributing to the assignation of value. Here he endeavours to explain how the problem of value – and alienation – is determined above all by struggle, in particular the contested ways in which people can inadvertently value in terms of labour and that the ability of capitalists to reorganize the labour process in a context of inter-capitalist competition (95-96).

The third proposition put forth by Knafo (2007) is regarding the way this new reading of value theory fundamentally alters political Marxism's approach to value theory. Linking this school of thought with value theory offers an avenue to historicize the problem of value and alienation in relationship to both the origins of capitalism and the social transformations within capitalism itself, both of which are not just determined by economic factors (99-100).

2.2 On Human Nature

The transition that took place was the outcome of the actions of a society that was responding to changing dynamics and logics that were being forced upon people. While the transition was not the outcome of individual human actions, it was the outcome of the societal response to the varying conditions. The transition had a dialectical relationship to the people that lived in England during the period of the transition. While the people who lived within that society directly influenced the direction and scope of the transition, the people were simultaneously influenced and shaped by the changes that were taking place during the transition. Marx & Engels (1970) note one side of this relationship when they say that "*History* does *nothing*… [it] is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve *its own* aims; history is *nothing* but the activity of man pursuing his aims" (Seen in Sayers, 1998, p. 163). It is the other side of this dialectic relationship that will be explored in this section. This section will deal with some of the extra-economic impacts of the transition to capitalism. In particular, it will explore the impact the transition to capitalism has, and continues to have, on the people who live under it. The purpose of this section is to understand who these people are - not as individuals, or even as a society acting at a particular time under particular circumstances, but to understand people as a whole. To look into the concept of human nature and understand where the motivation and incentive to do the things we do comes from is extremely important in understanding the notion of alienation because, in its essence, alienation is a theory about how humans have been fettered by the capitalist mode of production in our drive for self-realization. This section will introduce a few of the most prominent theories regarding human nature and show how Marx's concept of it was a more holistic one that considered us as humans as a unique and extremely complicated set of actors. This section will begin with Hegel because of the significance of his social theory in influencing others, including Marx.

2.2.1 Social Theories of Hegel and Marx

Hegel begins his *Philosophy of Right* with the statement that "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational" (Hegel, 1821, p. 10). This statement, taken in isolation, portrays (and rightly so) an extremely conservative social statement. In this light this statement acts as a justification for the status quo. It justifies everything that currently exists as rational and therefore not needing to be questioned or challenged. This falls in line with some of Hegel's other ideas (i.e. his justification that things are the way they are because of divine providence) and therefore has roots that extend to beyond this single statement. However, there is a radically different side to Hegel as well. This other side comes about when we realize that Hegel has another term that creates a distinction between what actually *exists* and what is the *actual* essence of the phenomena being studied. This distinction will be expanded shortly, but Hegel, despite his conservative overtones, puts forth a scientific understanding of the social sphere and argues that this sphere need not be relegated to the subjective realm, but instead can be approached morally and critically. He rejects the subjective theme that exists within Kantian philosophy and the notion that the order and necessity that exist are merely our 'way of seeing things'. Kant draws this from the fact that because the natural world is governed by laws that are external to ourselves, we can study this objectively, but because the social world is created and governed by laws and rules that are made by men and women, it is wrong to look at these objectively. Hegel criticizes this approach because it leads to an understanding of and interaction with the social realm that is "passive" and "acquiescent". Hegel agrees that the human world is distinct from the natural world in the role that consciousness plays, but he "rejects the idea that reason is a transcendent and absolute quality" that creates a distinct gulf between the two. He sees human consciousness not as purely determined by some natural superior forces, instead as historical and social products (Sayers, 1998, pp. 95–98). One must be careful because Hegel's theory is shrouded in a "mystical shell" in which he not only tried to understand society, but also to justify it because he believes that world history is governed by divine

providence and therefore any criticism of it is futile. This serves to justify the status quo and therefore falls in line with the conservative reading of his opening statements in *The Philosophy of Right*.

While it is important to be conscious of this thread of justifying the status quo that is weaved through the fabric of his social theory, there are kernels of a critical approach that he introduces that are extremely useful. He does not expand on these because of the fetter that religion plays on his thought. So while he believes that the actual is rational and vice versa, he introduces a third term to show that this is not a simple case of justification of what is. This third term is *existence*. This third term signifies a lower form of being that falls short of the actual "essence" of the thing. Sayers (1998) coherently describes the distinction between actual and existing things: "An existing thing is actual only when its existence is in harmony with its essence; when its existence corresponds with its proper notion, function or idea. On the other hand, 'when this unity is not present, a thing is not actual even though it may have acquired existence'" (101). Another term Hegel uses to make these ideas more coherent is the term *Truth*. Truth, for Hegel, represents correctness. He notes that "Truth in the deeper sense consists in the identity between objectivity and the notion. It is in this deeper sense of truth that we speak of a true state, or a true work of art. These objects are true if they are as they ought to be; i.e. if their reality corresponds with their notion" (Seen in Sayers, 1998, p. 99). Although this might seem redundant at first, Hegel notes that this term is often used in daily parlance as well. We often speak of a "true" friend who is different from a regular friend because their "manner of conduct accords with the notion of friendship (Seen in Sayers, 1998, p. 100)

The addition of these extra terms gives Hegel's statement a depth that does not exist when the sentence is taken in isolation. It shows that just because something exists, it is not necessarily true and therefore not the thing in actuality, but instead a lower (or bad) form of it. This insinuates that everything that *exists* has not reached its *true* state and is therefore open to criticism. This is the critical

and dialectical thread that exists in the fabric of Hegelianism. It is these threads which Marx and Engels will build on in order to create a system of thought that is critical but does not attempt to justify the way society has progressed. Therefore in order for something to be without contradiction it must not only exist, but it must also be rational and true. Marx uses this to critique the existing state in noting that its existing form is a bad version of the actual and true form (for him the socialist state). He notes that the state must be criticized for the ways it falls short of the ideal, but he is also careful not to fall into the Kantian trap involving a priori or subjective ideals. There is for Marx an objective notion of the state which has an essence that the current state falls short of (Marx, 1993). The problem in this case is only shifted elsewhere. As Sayers (1998) notes, "although the actual may be rational, by no means all that exists is rational and actual. The question remains of how far this tautological notion of rational actuality is applicable to the existent world around us" (102). To continuously hold things that currently exist as "bad" to some potential "good" seems futile and utopian. The purpose of the social sciences should instead strive to understand the world that currently exists and how it came to be that way in order to meaningfully move in a direction that leads to a better society and this is where Marx's method is extremely useful.

Another area that Hegel falls short is where he assigns agency in society and the factors that shape it. Because of his dogmatic reliance on religion he believes that it is the ideal or the idea that presupposes society, i.e. that the idea comes first and that only when it is implemented or practiced that the contradictions and particulars of that idea are realized. This gives agency to ideas in shaping society and is dangerous because it is a slippery slope from this to a Kantian notion of society which Hegel rejects. Marx outright rejects this causal relationship that Hegel proposes. He believes that the agency acts in the opposite direction and therefore turns Hegel's notion "on its feet". He notes that "For Hegel, the life process of the human brain […] is the demiurgos [creator] of the real world and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me […] the idea is nothing else than the material world

reflected by the human brain, and transformed into forms of thought" (Marx, 1977, p. 19). Here Marx states that it is not the idea which comes first and shapes society, but the opposite. Our ideas and notions of what society is and should be are formed and shaped by the society in which we live. Our ideas are subjected to the objective reality (society) in which we live. Marx goes on to note that "in direct contrast to German [Hegelian] philosophy, which descends from heaven to Earth, here we ascend from Earth to heaven […] We set out from the real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process" (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 47). This shows that it is society that creates the circumstances in which we create the ideas and ideals of society. Although sometimes this can lead Marx on a teleological journey of the shape of future societies, there is an avenue of his thought that does not take that path, but instead uses a relative and historic understanding of capitalist society in order to create a meaningful critique of capitalism. As Sayers (1998) notes, "Marx does not set out to judge capitalism against any pre-established moral values, nor to posit an ideal socialist state of the future. Rather, he attempts to understand and explain in scientific terms the working of existing capitalist society. […] In this way – by exposing, articulating, and analysing the critical and revolutionary tendencies and forces already at work in the world – Marx provides the most powerful and effective critique of capitalism: a scientific critique" (110). This scientific critique of capitalism is extremely useful in its ability to factor in subjective aspects of a society while maintaining that even something as subjective as the society that we live in can be objectively critiqued and questioned. The next section will continue to lay the groundwork for Marx's scientific critique of capitalism by introducing us to his views on morality.

2.2.2 Marxism and Morality

The discussion on Marx's social theory is instructive to give a glimpse into how his theory of human nature comes about. In order to tackle this issue, this paper will first analyze Marx's stance on morality and connect that to his theory of human nature as a whole. The issue of morality and Marxism has been

contentious. One school of thought believes that Marxism offers a strictly scientific account of society and therefore has no room for assessing and analyzing any appeals to moral principles. This school believes that morality is only a reflection of social conditions and therefore judging a society on moral terms results in a form of relativism that Marxists in general condemn. The other side of the coin believes that Marx lodges a critique of capitalism that is based on the injustices of capital's logic and therefore is inherently a moral critique. It appears that both of these schools of thought fall into the trap of missing the forest for the trees. Marx, in his criticism of capitalism, does both. He offers a scientific analysis of capital and its relations while simultaneously lodging a moral critique against it. These two are not necessarily mutually exclusive. His purpose with morality is to situate and understand it, as opposed to critique it. Sayers (1998) puts it succinctly when he notes "Marxism does not involve a moral approach to history; but rather a historical approach to morality" (116). This means that it does not appeal to a universal set of moral principles or values from which he critiques capitalism, but instead believes that morality is a social and historical phenomenon. This interpretation of Marxism opens it up to critiques that Marxism then becomes a strictly relativist approach because there are a number of different and conflicting alternative moralities that all have equal claim to validity. This critique, as Sayers (1998) notes, views society as a monolithic structure that imparts the same influence on all of its members. Marx does not view society in this way. He notes that our society is full of contradictions and inequalities and underlying all this is a class struggle caused by the uneven way in which society treats different members of society. While this alone does not overcome the relativism of Marx's theory, this in conjunction with his thoughts on progress and historical development show that this is not just a subjective approach in which all theories have the same validity. His theory does not portray history as an arbitrary sequence of social systems that have succeeded each other, but puts forth that the order in which they occurred was as it was because of the social conditions that existed at various points in history. Therefore there is an objectivity that goes along with his theory. However, it is important to

note that in Marx's earlier writings he is guilty of going too far down the objective path. This is evident in his teleological notion of progress that is present in his earlier work. This being noted, however, it is important to keep in mind that this does not take away from his assessment and treatment of morality and his assessment of capitalism.

Marx uses this notion of progress not to justify capitalism, but instead to level a historical assessment of capitalism. So while feudalism need not necessarily have given rise to the capitalist mode of production, that is the chronological order in which these systems existed and therefore his assessment of capitalism as more "progressive" than feudalism still holds some merit. This framework is useful in showing that capitalism, while it has many negative and extremely destructive tendencies, it has also progressed society in some very real ways. The amount of wealth that exists in the world today, the technological advances that have occurred, and from a moral standpoint the advances in equality and liberty for a vast majority of the population are things that came about through the capitalist mode of production. Marx is extremely critical of many of the things that exist within capitalism, but he also believes that capitalism was a necessary step on the road to a classless society. He believes that morality is a historical phenomenon that has progressed in tandem with societal progress and that this trend will continue until socialism comes about. He uses the notion of private property as an example of this when he says: "from the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quire as absurd as the private ownership of one man by another" (Marx & Engels, 1971, p. 776). Although this passage may be used to show that Marx is being moralistic by appealing to absolute standards, he is in fact noting the historical nature of morality. Here he shows that in previous societies private ownership of people (slavery) was commonplace and justified but that in our current one it seems incongruous. In the same way, in a future society the private ownership of land will seem absurd to members of that society even though it is taken as a truism for our current society

to operate. This does not prescribe a universal morality on all humans, but one that is conditioned, shaped, and created by the society in which we live.

Marx's stance on morality can be extrapolated to other areas of humanity as well. The most relevant for our purposes is the creation of new needs and wants in humans. Marx notes that by "acting on the external world, [man] at the same time changes his own nature" (Marx & Engels, 1971, p. 177). Therefore human nature is not an a-historical or absolute thing. It is affected by the society in which we live and is constantly changing and evolving within a particular mode of production as well. It is also important not to deny that there are some needs that remain constant regardless of the society in which one lives (the need to eat for example). Some philosophers argue that every "need" beyond bare survival is a false need. While these accounts can level a criticism against capitalism it is a shallow one that urges us to move backwards in the ways in which we live. Marx on the other hand does not label every need beyond mere survival as a regression, but sees that these needs can potentially create the conditions for a better life and have a positive influence on individuals and society as a whole. Again, this is not to say that *all* new needs that are created in society are justified, but that they should be considered historically and socially and judged in relation to the society in which one lives.

This focus on morality gives a window into the development of the needs and wants that are strongly associated with human nature. We can apply the historical approach that was taken to understand morality to understand the transitional and social nature of human nature. We can draw parallels with the growth of morality over the centuries to the growth of human nature. This does not mean that at every stage in history the one that came after was a more moral one than the previous. This simply implies that the general trend that has taken place has been towards a greater morality and liberty as opposed to the opposite. As an example of this, the feudal social relations that existed for centuries legally bound a person to a certain role in society from birth (a peasant could not become a lord for

example). While there was some revolt against this system, it lasted for centuries and was seen as the norm for organizing society. As productive capacities grew and the appropriate circumstances came about, this shackling of members of society to particular roles was no longer necessary for society to reproduce itself and consequently there was a shift in the dominant ideology that ruled over society. While there is definitely room for improvement and growth, the legal equality of all humans under the law is something to be applauded and built upon. The replacement of feudalism with capitalism therefore created a new dominant morality that is better in some very important ways. It has therefore been instrumental in creating new needs among society but the realization of these new needs are fettered by the capitalist system itself.

This last point will be discussed in the upcoming sections, but it is important to clarify here that Marx's focus on technology and progress does not put him in the utilitarian school of thought. Here a quick word on Bentham and Mill's thoughts on human nature will show the clear difference between the utilitarian conception of human nature and Marx's. Bentham put forth the most straightforward and pure form of hedonism. For him, the goal of humanity is to increase satisfaction while minimizing pain. Happiness for him can be measured quantitatively and one form of happiness is the same as any other. He famously notes that "Quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry" (Seen in Sayers, 1998, p. 142). His follower, Mill, had a similar framework with one important distinction. His theory of human nature rested on the "Greatest Happiness Principle" which states that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (Mill, 1901, p. 6). Mill disagreed with Bentham in that he believed that the quality of happiness did matter and that not all forms of happiness are equal. He is famous for noting that it is "better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (Mill, 1901, p9). This distinction made by Mill has been criticized for being irreconcilable with any form of utilitarianism; the critique being that his distinction introduces a subjective aspect that does not allow for the utilitarian vision of humans as calculating

beings who are only trying to gain the most pleasure while avoiding the most pain. Whether this is so and the ramifications for Mill's theory are beyond the scope of the paper, but two important aspects of both these thinkers is that their notion of human nature is based primarily on the human being as a consumer and that the human being is seen as an individual who is acting solely for their own benefit. This is directly contrary to Marx's ideas about human nature. For him, we are inherently productive beings and many of the pleasures and satisfactions from life are gained from producing things that the rest of society deems useful. In addition to this we are also fundamentally social beings. Sayers (1998) describes this characteristic well when he notes that "we are inherently and essentially social beings. We develop our natures – our individuality and freedom – only by participating in society, only in and through social relations. For liberty does not exist merely in the absence of social constraint; it is not a purely negative phenomenon. It also requires the presence – the positive existence – of the social conditions in which we can actually develop and use our powers and capacities" (7). Now that some of the inner workings of Marx's method have been laid out, this paper will now explore Marx's conception of human nature.

2.2.3 Marx's Concept of Human Nature

Marx puts forth a theory of humanity that is both historical and social. This theory posits that the needs and wants of humans are formed and constantly in flux based on the society that we are a part of. This fluctuating and dependent aspect of human nature can be seen by the changes that have taken place in what constitutes a human right. Human rights as a framework have many problems that will not be addressed in this paper, but they can form a useful lens to show how the needs of humans have been altered by the society in which we live. While they do not necessarily indicate the things that are essential for survival, they do give an idea of what is deemed important socially in order to properly function as a member of society. The passing of the internet as a human right a few years back is very telling on this point. While it can easily be argued that one does not need the internet to survive or have

a meaningful life, it has become a need in order for us to function in society today. A personal anecdote on this matter was particularly telling. For the last 3 years my housemates and myself have lived without an internet connection at our house and for the vast majority of the time we did not have a data connection on any of our phones. This left us without any access to the internet while we were at home. While we survived and actually enjoyed being away from being constantly connected, the most common reaction that I got from telling people my situation was “How do your survive without the internet?”. Of course none of the people asking that question were concerned about our ability to live or reproduce ourselves, but the prevalence of social media and the place that the internet has taken in our lives, especially in western society, makes it appear that having access to the internet has become more than just a luxury.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that human nature is trans-historical or that there exist traits in human beings that are ‘natural’ and ‘essential’ and are not based on social conditions. While Marxism acknowledges that these traits do in fact exist, it also recognizes that humans are much more complicated than just seeking to satisfy these base desires. We are much more than creatures that are on this earth simply to eat, shelter ourselves, and reproduce. Human nature has two elements: a universal one and a particular one. In delineating these two types of needs there is a large body of literature. One school of thought, the essentialist approach, believes that there are two distinct spheres that are only externally related. The one being what some authors refer to as, ‘minimal biological needs’, and the other being the needs that are socially developed (like the need for self-realization). The other account, the historicist approach, believes that it is not possible to distinguish between these needs. Instead of having two distinct spheres of needs, they believe that there is only one that encompasses both: The socially modified need. My contention is that what we actually are falls somewhere in the middle of these two ends. That while we do have minimal biological needs, those are also shaped and affected by the society in which we live. As Sayers (1998) puts it “Even our most basic

biological functions occur in a social context by which they are modified; and even our highest and most socially developed achievements are the activities of the biological organism that we, as human beings, are. Human beings are natural-social beings." (154)

These distinctions are important because of the role that they play in social theories and in their explanations of human nature. In the essentialist approach, it is universal human needs that take an explanatory role in the shape that society takes (i.e. in the productive and social relations that exist). Marx, on the other hand, while acknowledging the role that universal human needs play in compelling people towards productive activity, believes that these needs give very little insight into the specifics regarding how that productive activity takes place and the social relations that they create. He uses the universal aspects of human nature to describe 'production in general' or abstract notions of production. These are the starting points to understanding the whole picture of human nature. These needs give the foundation on which particular manifestations of society and the needs associated with that society are established. In order to understand specific social conditions, he believes that it is necessary to go past these and into more specific organizations in society in order to understand where and how these needs arise. These needs do not create the society in which we live, but the other way around. This is similar to the way Marx turned Hegel's theory 'on its feet' that was mentioned before. Therefore as opposed to looking at production in general which will give an understanding of universal human needs, we must focus on specific modes of production in order to understand the specific, social, and historical needs that are created. The other criticism of this is that the essentialist approach cannot explain transitions between different economic systems. If universal human needs are the main driver of our production and social relations, why have these changed so drastically over time? The Marxist approach then does not reject the notion of a universal human nature, but instead "it is a form of humanism which gives moral values a realistic social and historical foundation" (Sayers, 1998, p. 159).

Here Marx puts forth two terms to describe these two aspects of human nature: “natural man” to outline some of the needs that are not specific to human beings and “species man” which describes the characteristics in humans that are specific for humans and not shared by other living things. In order to lay the foundation for exploring these two terms, Marx’s concept of “power” and “need” will be introduced. These terms, like many of Marx’s ideas, are not static entities and therefore any attempt to define them rigidly is futile, but an attempt will be made to give the reader a general understanding of what he means by these terms. Ollman (1976) notes that “the nearest ordinary language equivalents of ‘power’, as used by Marx, are ‘faculty’, ‘ability’, ‘function’, and ‘capacity’” but that even these fall short of what Marx intended. He goes on to note that “’power’ also suggests potential, the possibility - particularly in changed conditions – of becoming more of whatever it already is” (76-77). Needs, on the other hand, when viewed apart from their relationship to powers, are relatively simple. They refer to “the desire one feels for something, usually something which is not immediately available” (77). The important point to make for needs is that humans not only have them objectively, but also feel them subjectively. There is a dialectical relationship that exists between needs and powers. Ollman sums it up well when he notes that “Each power is coupled in man with a distinctive need for the objects necessary for its realization, to make itself known and allow for its development as a power” (78). While “a power is whatever is used that ‘fulfills’ a need. To know any power is therefore to know its corresponding need and vice versa” (78). The needs that exist are dependent on the social and economic relations that exist, and the power to fulfill those needs are likewise limited by these same conditions.

Those terms in place, Marx’s notion of Natural man and Species man will now be explored. Natural man is the term Marx uses to describe the tendencies and desires we have that are shared with other living creatures. Ollman (1976) notes that these natural powers have two outstanding characteristics. First, they exist as tendencies and abilities – as impulses. This is best understood by understanding that for “each natural power that he possesses man feels ‘impulses’ (needs) to realize or actualize it; he has

'abilities' which enable him to realize it; and he carries 'tendencies' which direct this realization towards particular goals" (80). Second, that humans seek their fulfillment from outside rather than from within. While these two characteristics seem complex, they are characteristics that exist within all living creatures. Animals also feel the same tendencies and have the corresponding abilities to fulfil them which are sought externally to the animal. The idea of hunger and satisfying that by hunting is an example of animals feeling an impulse and acting external to themselves to satisfy it. Therefore Marx's concept of 'Natural man', according to Ollman, is a conception that abstracts man from all that is particular to the species, to see man without intellectual abilities or self-awareness. Alongside this 'Natural man' is also Marx's concept of the 'Species man". Here, humans are distinguished from other animals in our consciousness. As Ollman (1976) notes, "man is a species being because he knows what only man can know, namely that he is the species being, man" (84). He goes on to note that humans confirm and manifest themselves as species being in two ways: 1. "by looking, sounding, smelling, feeling and, we may suppose, tasting like a man"; and 2. "through activity of a kind, quality, and pace, that could only be done by human beings" (84). While it can be easy to imagine the natural man without the species man, it is impossible to have a species being that does not have a natural being attached to it. It is the nature of our relationship with ourselves, others, and the environment that distinguishes us from other living organisms. Ollman again sums up this point succinctly: "If natural powers can be viewed as establishing the framework in which life itself goes on, then man's species powers express the kind of life which man, as distinct from all other beings, carries on inside this framework" (85). It is important to note that while Marx uses two different terms he is not trying to separate these two to see which characteristics are natural and which are specific to the species. He sees all five senses as both because even though most other animals have them, the way in which we have developed and use our senses is specific to humans and therefore is distinguished from the way in which they have been developed and used in other species.

Marx's account also links productive powers with human nature. It links productive powers and the relations associated with it to the creation of social relations and since social relations determine our needs, productive powers do so as well. But this view is not a one sided one. It is not just society that shapes human nature, but they both, dialectically, influence each other and therefore is much more complicated than a one sided notion of agency in either way. Sayer quotes Lichtman who put this process well: "we are simultaneously the subject and object of our own activity" (Sayers, 1998, p. 162). This view can give rise to a teleological picture of history. With the advancement of technology, society develops in a certain way and the continued advancement will then lead society in a certain, potentially pre-determined, direction. While Marx is sometimes guilty of falling into this trap, we must be careful to avoid this temptation. We must not give productive relations more agency than they actually have and see them as what they are: very important in determining the shape of our social relations, but still mediated by humans who are extremely complicated actors whose actions cannot be predicted. We must therefore study each period in history independently and not try and impose the logics of one time period on that of another (whether going backward or forward in time). This is the trap that the commercialization model falls into and we must be careful not to follow suit.

Instead of falling into the teleological trap, a better way to conceptualize the changing nature of society and its impacts on human nature is to use evolution as an analogy. This analogy is useful in three important aspects: first, It does not see that every single iteration that takes place as being positive, or moving in the right direction. It does postulate that the general trend, over long periods of time, is to move in a direction that is positive. This allows for social theory to accept discontinuities (like Germany leading up to WWII) but allow for the general positive trend that we have seen in society. The second positive aspect of the evolutionary theory is that it does not have a final goal to be reached for a species. While Marx can be shown to view socialism as the final stage in human development, even he recognizes that there will be progression and development within communism. This allows for society

not to be judged with respect to some abstract end, but only relatively. The third area where this analogy is useful is in where agency lies. In evolution the exterior conditions affect the object that is evolving while at the same time the object that is evolving is affecting the exterior conditions. It is not only the environment in which a being is placed that affects the process of evolution, but also the being plays a crucial role in directing the route that evolution takes. With these three points in mind, the theory of how living organisms evolve in response to their environment is very useful in understanding how human nature progresses in response to the society in which one lives. While every iteration of society and therefore its impact on human nature need not necessarily be in a progressive direction, the general thrust is in the direction of increased freedom and liberties to allow for human nature to expand and grow. This theory is also beneficial to avoiding a teleological outlook on history and social theory. The notion that there is no "final version" of society or end goal to be reached allows for the potential of society, and human nature, to develop in any number of different ways if the conditions to do so exist. Finally, in giving agency not just to society to act on individuals, but allowing room for individuals to act on society, the dialectical relationship between society and the way it shapes human nature and vice versa can exist when this analogy is used. There are, of course, many shortcomings to this analogy, but it serves as a useful compliment to overcome the shortcomings in Marx's theory with regards to the teleological temptation while outlining some of the key aspects to the theory.

One must be nuanced when addressing the notion of human nature, which is not something that can be objectively or rigidly defined. It is both a subjective topic as well as one that can have a degree of objectivity. Human nature is both transhistorical and historically variable. It is affected by larger social and productive relations and also directly affects these. Human nature is thus imbued with a certain degree of uncertainty. Just where the line is drawn between continuity and change, and between agency and determination is impossible to tell exactly; this has profound impacts on the way human nature is theorized. A balanced account is necessary. If one goes too far in one direction human nature

becomes something that is completely malleable and therefore every facet of it is affected by the surrounding contexts. This leaves no room for human nature to impact the shape of society and the relations that are built. At the other end of the spectrum, human nature becomes immune to major historical transformation. This is also a dangerous path because it undermines attempts to develop an objective understanding of the world. In this second view, social relations have no role in shaping the nature of our humanity. We must find a middle ground where historically variable social and economic forms and human nature determine each other.

Marx's concept of human nature is central to his overall critique of capitalism because Marxism is based on a moral critique. He notes that although capitalism has created an unprecedented level of wealth in our society, it has not allowed humans to reach our full potential. Marx notes that "In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new-fangled sources of wealth by some strange weird spell, are turned into sources of want … at the same pace that mankind masters nature, man seems to become enslaved to other man and to his own infamy" (seen in Sayers (1998), p 160). This critique is based on a notion of human nature that is historical, relative, and scientific that has human well-being as the basis for its criticism. Sayers (1998) notes that "Marxism judges human social and moral development in terms of its impact on the growth of human nature – of human powers, capacities and needs" (164). This shortcoming of capitalism is at the heart of Marx's social theory and at the heart of this criticism is his theory of alienation. While the details and the intricacies of the theory of alienation will be explored in the next section, Dickens (1859) in his *Tale of Two Cities* starts off his book by noting this contradiction in poetic language:

> "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of light,

it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to heaven, we were all going direct to the other way" (5).

3.0 Alienation

> What requires explanation is not the unity of living and active human beings with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolism, with nature, and therefore with the appropriation of nature; nor is this the result of a historical process. What we must explain is the separation of these inorganic conditions of human existence from this active existence, a separation which is only fully completed in the relations between wage-labour and capital (Seen in Ollman (1976, p 133)

Marx uses the concept of alienation to explain this rift that has been created between the current condition of human beings and the potential that we have. For this paper the definition of alienation that Ollman (1976) posits will be utilized. He defines it as "the intellectual construct in which Marx displays the devastating effect of capitalist production on human beings, on their physical and mental states and on the social processes of which they are a part" (131). In addition to the three areas where Ollman notes the destructive effects of capitalist production, in recent years a fourth has come to be of increasing significance: the environment. With climate change a reality and the causes of this crisis almost unanimous, there is little doubt that capitalist production has played a crucial role in exacerbating the climate crisis and therefore is an aspect that should be taken seriously in any intellectual construction that aims to reveal the destructive effects of capitalist production on human well-being and development.

Alienation therefore goes much deeper than just the alienation of humans from the production process. It also touches on the impacts that capitalist production has had on the condition of the species itself, the overall wellbeing of the people who are forced to live under this economic system, the relationships that are built and fostered under these production relations, and the environment that we all have to live in. Another critical detail of the definition is that it only addresses the destruction that is caused by

the capitalist mode of production. This definition does not aim to suggest that these destructive forces did not exist in previous methods of economic or social organization. It must be stated at the outset that some form of these destructive forces have existed in various combinations and to varying degrees of severity within other forms of production and throughout history. In some cases one aspect of this destruction was worse than the way that it manifests itself within capitalist production. Within slavery, for example, the destruction that was wreaked on the human body was much worse for the majority population than it is under capitalism. This definition then is useful for identifying the unique characteristics of the environmental, social, and personal destruction that has been manifested through capitalist production. In order to trace some of the roots of this process, first the transition to capitalism will be analyzed using the framework that was laid out in the first section of this paper. This involves tracing back to the origins of some of the ideas and concepts that have created the current state of alienation. This section will focus on some of the extra economic factors that were revolutionized by the transition and how these exacerbate alienation. Next, the theory of alienation will be developed to explain and show some of the destructive effects that capitalism has had on human relations to production, human relations to each other, and human relations to the environment. This section will show how the capitalist mode of production is responsible for the stifling of the human nature, an effect caused by the increased wealth and productive power created within capitalism.

It is important to note that this paper uses a very specific definition of alienation that is different from the broader use of the term. Williams (1985) notes that while this term can be used in many different ways, its primary use is to describe forms of estrangement. This estrangement can range from a feeling of separation from God to the breakdown of social relations between either individuals or groups of people. While these two themes explain an exterior relationship, the way that alienation will be used in this paper will be more to refer to internal relations. This paper uses the term alienation to describe the ways in which human beings are prevented from reaching their full potential. This is the difference

between the form and essence of alienation. While the broader uses of the term typically tend to address the external *form* alienation takes, this paper will dig a little deeper and attempt to understand the internal *essence* of alienation. The underlying factors that create the external manifestations of alienation will be explored to ensure that one is not trying to treat the symptoms but the root causes of alienation. This conception of alienation will therefore be much more general than the broader uses. As opposed to focusing on specific manifestations of alienation, this paper will use the concept of alienation to show how capitalist social relations have degraded human potential and have become a force that hinders any further growth in human nature. In principle, the notion of alienation discussed in this paper can be developed to explain things like racism, sexism, or colonialism where one group of people are not allowed to reach their full potential because of some social force. While I will not develop the term fully in these directions in this paper, this paper will lay the groundwork for a framework that can be used to understand these phenomena in a systemic and relational way.

3.1 Extra Economic Effects of the transition to capitalism

In order to understand some of the non-economic impacts of the transition to capitalism and in an attempt to avoid what Polanyi (1977) termed, "the economistic fallacy", Ollman's (1976) interpretation of Marx's alienation will be taken with respect to some of the events and occurrences that took place around the transition. There are a few key points about Ollman's study that need to be brought to light in order to apply his theory of alienation to the events around the transition. The first is that his theory is a study of people in their relations with each other, their products, their activities, and the environment. The people that Ollman studies are not particular individuals, but people who are socially constructed and whose "conditions become an extension of who he (sic) is and what he does, rather than the reverse" (ix). This follows well from Sayers notion of human nature and the agency that is played out with the factors that affect it. Ollman also views human consciousness as well as the thoughts and ideas that we have as being very strongly influenced by the society in which we live. He

notes that “man’s consciousness of himself and of his relations with others and with nature are that of a social being, since the manner in which he conceives of anything is a function of his society” (108). Ollman’s theory also places social relations as a subject matter. This gives causal power to social relations and assumes that these relations are not simply by-products of other factors but have a degree of agency embedded within them. Finally, Ollman repeatedly insists that internal relations must be central in any understanding of alienation. This places an emphasis on the internal content of social and productive relations while placing less significance on the external form that manifests. This emphasis typically leads to a dialectic method. Ollman (1976) describes this as follows: “The dialectical method of inquiry is best described as research into the manifold ways in which entities are internally related” (62). Using these notes about Ollman’s method, let us now dive into some of the social relations that existed within rural England during the transition to see how the transition affected more than just economic relations.

3.1.1 The state

One of the biggest differences that allowed for capitalism to emerge in rural England was the role that the state played. This unique characteristic of the state was described in the first section of the paper. In brief, the English state was more unified which allowed it to have a monopoly control over the use of force. Ollman (1976) notes that the role of the state can be seen as a reflection of the relationship between an individual and the society in which s/he lives. He believes that “in capitalism, the state is an abstraction in political life on the same plane that value is in economic life” (216)[2]. This comes about by the reification of the powers that are given to the state and the autonomous character they take. He goes on to note that “like value, the state expresses the alienated relations of capitalist society” (216).

[2] Here it is important to clarify what Ollman means by an abstraction and how this relates to alienation. He believes that “at its simplest, ‘abstraction’ refers to the type of purity that is achieved in emptiness”. He goes on to note that the alienated man is an abstraction because “he has lost touch with all human specificity” and therefore is reduced to the lowest common denominator of what a human can be. A person is said to be an abstraction of themselves if they have lost all unique characteristics that differentiate her/him from others (Ollman, 1976, p. 134).

Here value in capitalist society plays an abstraction to the real cost of a product. Value hides all the social relations that went into producing that commodity behind a number (the price). Therefore although all commodities are produced in different conditions using different tools and raw materials, all the social relations that were necessary to produce a commodity are abstracted away and only a price tag remains as the primary and driving factor on which a consumer bases her/his purchasing decision. Similarly, in the capitalist state, all citizens are seen to be equal under the eyes of the law, but a crucial word in this statement is that the citizens are, in fact, *under* the law. They are forced to abide by the laws of the state in which they live. The only way in which that system would be just is if the people were allowed to choose the laws under which they were to live. This was most certainly not the case in England during the transition and is still not the case in today's society. This arrangement of people living under laws that they did not have any power to influence therefore creates a façade of equality while hiding the true power and social relations that exist to create and enforce these laws. This can be explained as a sort of political fetishism where the internal social relations are hidden. The origins of this process can be seen to come about within the transition to capitalism. With the centralization of the state that occurred and the loss of extra-economic forms of coercion from land owners, the ruling class was forced to resort to intervention by the centralized state to bring about the laws that they desired. Ollman notes: "another aspect of political alienation in capitalism is that the centralization of governmental institutions together with bourgeoning population has gone so far as to rule out all meaningful face to face contact between the governed and the governors" (217). These trends can be seen by some of the legislation that was passed when capitalism first started to spread in England. This paper will focus on two sets of regulations to show the role that the state played in alienating itself from its members: (i) a set of regulations that were designed to create a new workforce, and (ii) the repealing of Speenhamland.

This alienated state was responsible for passing a series of legislations whose intention was to create a new workforce from the people whose land was recently enclosed. The enclosure movement resulted in a large number of people who lost ownership of their land. This loss of land was not just the loss of a place to live, but also their means of reproducing themselves since most people in that time relied almost exclusively on the land for their subsistence. This legislation was not a single piece of legislation, but a series of laws that were passed to ensure that those who had just lost their ability to reproduce themselves would become members of a new type of workforce that was becoming increasingly significant in England during the period leading up to the transition. Marx terms these "Bloody Legislation Against the Expropriated"(Marx, 1977, pp. 896–905). Within this set of legislation there were two themes that took place. First was the fixing of wages and the struggle for the working day. Within this, first there was a maximum wage that was fixed. This was put in place to curb some of the demands that labour was making and to allow for the complementary trend to increase the length of the working day. These two measures allowed for power to be given primarily to employers. Employers were allowed to lengthen the working day to a level that was on the cusp of workers' physical limits, and them being legislated to cap the maximum that they were allowed to pay their workers is something well beyond any conceivable moral limit. However, these are ideal conditions for the maximization of surplus extraction. A large increase in the length of the working day combined with a legal maximum wage is a recipe for social disaster and brought about the serious question of whether workers were able to sufficiently reproduce themselves under these circumstances. To ensure that workers could continue to reproduce themselves, there was a series of legislations that were passed in the early to mid-nineteenth century that were designed to limit the length of the working day. These were passed not to ensure that workers had a decent life or with their concerns in mind, but with the long term interest of capital in mind. In order for this bourgeoning system to continue to grow, it required a workforce that was capable of working while also reproducing themselves to create the next generation

of workers. It was found that the perfect blend of long workdays along with a maximum wage for the extraction of surplus value was extremely deleterious to the health and wellbeing of labour and therefore its ability to reproduce itself. In order to continue to have a workforce, the English Factory Acts were passed to limit the length of the workday (Marx, 1977).

The second set of "Bloody Legislation" was passed to deal with people who refused to or did not want to work. In this set, the first piece of legislation was passed in 1530 and it mandated that only those who were elderly and unable to work would receive a licence that would allow them to beg and anyone caught begging without this licence would be tortured. In 1572 a law was passed that exacerbated the punishment that was wrought on people who were found begging without a licence. The penalty was that for the first offence they would be flogged and branded. The second time they were caught they would be executed unless someone takes them into service, while the third time meant that they would be executed regardless. In addition to this, in 1547 a statute was passed that ordained that if anyone were to refuse to work, they would become a slave whose master is the person who "denounced him idler". As Marx poetically sums it up: "Thus were the agricultural people, first forcibly expropriated from the soil, driven from their homes, turned into vagabonds, and then whipped, branded, tortured by laws grotesquely terrible, into the discipline necessary for the wage system" (Marx, 1977, p. 880). The worst human effects of these legislations were mitigated by Speenhamland which acted to guarantee people a minimum wage. The second regulation that proved how alienated the state was from the people was the repealing of Speenhamland.

Speenhamland was the biggest impediment to the creation of a labour market. Before the introduction of this law, labour was bound to the parish and therefore lacked mobility. In 1795 (the same year that Speenhamland was adopted) legislation was passed that unbound labour from their parishes and thus allowed them to move. This measure was passed in order to create a labour market that was not limited

to the people that lived in one area, but allowed for landlords to get labour from places other than where they were located. There was concern (and rightly so) about the effects that this would have on peasants who were not protected by any other means and were not guaranteed the means to reproduce themselves. Speenhamland guaranteed everyone a minimum income that was based on the price of bread. This was seen as a major impediment to the creation of a labour market because it gave the peasants a way to survive without being exploited by landlords. Before the Speenhamland law came into existence, peasants were ruled by the Elizabethan Law where they were forced to work for whatever wages were offered and only those who did not work were entitled to relief. Speenhamland extended the relief to include even people who were working, but did not earn enough to reproduce themselves. This created a situation where labourers had no financial interest in satisfying their employers. Polanyi (1944) notes that because of this guarantee "[n]o measure was ever more universally popular" (83). Employers were happy because they were free to lower their wages to a bottomless minimum and labour was happy that they had a minimum guaranteed allowance to ensure their and their families reproduction. It is important to keep in mind that this was taking place before the capitalist logic had taken a firm root in peoples' minds. Being a pauper who was fed came with a social stigma. This traditional mindset is what stopped the contradiction of having a "right to live" law alongside wage labour from pushing wages to zero.

The repealing of this law meant that peoples "right to live" was no longer guaranteed by the state. Therefore in order for anyone (and their families) to survive, they had to sell their labour power on the market for a wage that was used to buy commodities. The repealing of Speenhamland was a major factor in the creation not only of the conditions in which a labour market could come forth, but it was also instrumental in moving society in a direction that would allow for the capitalist system to take root and entrench the ideologies that come along with it. The repealing of Speenhamland was in line with the new dominant ideology of the "economic man" who would do as little as possible to survive and

therefore would not opt to work for a wage if he could subsist while staying at home. Polanyi (2001) notes this well when he states that while the economic impacts of these policies are important, the extra-economic forces that arise are equally so:

> "If we suggest that the study of Speenhamland is the study of the birth of nineteenth-century civilization, it is not its economic and social effect that we have exclusively in mind, not even the determining influence of these effects upon modern political history, but the fact that, mostly unknown to the present generation, our social consciousness was cast in its mold" (87)

3.1.2 Private property

This mold that was created was a necessary step for the creation of the alienated state that aimed to give the appearance of the citizenry having power and agency while hiding the true power relations that existed. This mold went hand in hand with other changes that occurred in the social fabric through the transition. One of the major transformations that occurred was the introduction of private property and the social relations that followed from this. As was shown above, England was in a unique place politically with the erosion of extra-economic forms of coercion in the 16th century. This led to Locke's concept of "improvement" taking a very prominent role in the English ethos. Improvement was not necessarily about better methods or technology in agriculture, but "improvement meant, even more fundamentally, new forms and conceptions of property" (Wood, 2002, p. 107). It signalled a shift in the way land was both conceptualized and utilized – now only the most productive use of land would be considered and implemented. This process essentially converted land from being used to produce food to becoming pastures for sheep to graze on. This signalled a major shift in the priorities (values) of the English economy. From producing use values in the form of food, the land was seen to be more "useful" if it created exchange values in the form of wool from the sheep. This came in tandem with Locke's theory of property. Locke's theory conflated labour with value. While this is something that Marx also

believes, Locke's theory was extremely powerful because it put forth the notion that the labour of the one whose labour power I have purchased is my property. This would mean that the people who have bought labour power on the market have legal ownership of the products that are produced by the labour power that was purchased. This ethic was often used as a justification for some of the laws "to support the landlord seeking to extinguish the customary rights of commoners, to exclude them from common land, and to turn common land into exclusive private property by means of enclosure" (Woods, 2002, p.115). This newly adopted ethos was foundational in setting up the social structures and relations in which the alienation that currently exists could sprout, of which private property was central.

Marx refers to private property as "the material summary expression of alienated labour" and elsewhere he notes that it is

> "the sensuous expression of the fact that man becomes objective for himself and at the same time becomes to himself a strange and inhuman object; just as it expresses the fact that the assertion of his life is the alienation of his life, that his realization is the loss of reality, is an alien reality" (seen in Ollman (1976, p.159))

Ollman goes on to note that there is a dialectical relationship that exists between private property and alienated labour. He states that one cannot exist without the other, each creating the conditions and social relations necessary for the other to exist and reproduce itself. He notes that it is the movement of private property that leads to alienated labour. But when one digs deeper, it is can also be said that private property could only come about as a result of alienated labour. This reciprocal relationship is more than just one that continues trends that exist; it is one that each of these elements is foundationally necessary for the other to exist i.e. alienated labour could not exist without private property and vice versa. This relationship is summed up well by Marx when he notes that

> Private property is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence, of alienated labour, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself. Private property thus results by analysis from the concept of alienated labour – i.e. of alienated man, of estranged labour, of estranged life, of estranged man. True, it is as a result of the movement of private property that we have obtained the concept of alienated labour (of alienated life) from political economy. But on analysis of this concept it becomes clead that through private property appears to be the source the cause of alienated labour, it is really its consequence, just as the gods in the beginning are not the cause but the effect of man's intellectual confusion. Later this relationship becomes reciprocal. (Seen in Ollman, 1976, p. 163)

These two aspects (the new role of the state and private property) were central in creating the conditions for capitalism to arise. While capitalism could not have taken root without them, they also signalled a new phenomenon that was taking place outside of the realm of economics: in the development of human beings. This new capitalist mode of production allowed for a great deal of growth in human nature, but at the same time it constrained that growth. This contradictory aspect of capitalism is at the root of Marx's moral critique of the system and the theory of alienation is what he uses to bring this contradiction to the fore. The next section will touch on the various ways in which the new capitalist logic was inhibiting the growth of humans against the new potential that was created i.e. will dive into some of the ways that alienation actually occurs.

3.2 Theory of Alienation

While the definition of alienation was laid out earlier, it is important to note the relationship that exists between the concept of alienation and capitalism. Some of Marx's writings on alienation will be introduced to show that alienation is inherent to the capitalist mode of production. Next the concept of value that is created within capitalism will be analyzed, and although this will be explained in greater

detail in upcoming sections, it will lay the foundation for a moral critique of capitalism. As can be seen from the previous section, Marx had a great deal to say about the nature of humanity and the way that it was both transhistorical and socially determined. This leads to the moral component of his critique of capitalist production as an impediment to human growth. He believes that humans are primarily productive (as opposed to consumptive) beings and therefore our production relations are very instructive to our development. He then notes that because of the nature of social relations under capitalism, the products that are created and the ways in which they are produced constrain human development and impede us from reaching our potential as a species. Marx considers alienation to be intrinsic to any form of production that revolves around the exchange of commodities that are privately owned (Ollman, 1976). How this manifests itself will be analyzed in upcoming sections, but currently the internal dynamics that allow for this will be explored. Marx's words on this form an instructive lens from which to view the topics of the upcoming section. He notes that "presupposing private property, my work is an *alienation of life*, for I work *in order to live*, in order to obtain for myself the *means* of life. My work is *not* my life" (Marx, 1844).

In order to understand the internal relations that exist in order to create the conditions for alienation, it is first instructive to note that there was a shift in value relations that came about within the transition to capitalism. A telling example of this shift in values was the way that nature was considered after the transition and the drive that was created to try and quantify the value that existed within nature (both human and non-human). Burkett (2009) notes that this drive created a tension that continues to persist. Within the value relations that exist within capitalism, the only entity that is recognized to have value is money or capital. This creates a drive to monetize nature. He notes five primary contradictions that arise from this: (i) Nature cannot be disaggregated into discrete and homogenous value units; (ii) inability to account for the irreversible character of many natural processes; (iii) the tension between the infinite supply of money and finite supply of natural resources; (iv) disconnect between price and absolute size

of a nature stock; and (v) higher resource prices could potentially accelerate resource depletion (p 122-124). These contradictions, while they speak of the environmental consequences from the shift in value relations created during the transition, they also give a glimpse into how the shift in value relations had drastic impacts on the entity that was being valued. Burkett (2009) ends his book by noting that there is an intrinsic connection between the exploitation of nature and that of labour (which are both predicated on the value relations that are created) (242).

Therefore the value relations that are created within capitalism extend beyond nature and have created a new type of productive activity that is unique to capitalism: Labour. Marx notes this connection when he defines labour as, "in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature" (Marx, 1977, p. 284). While this aspect of labour has existed in all societies, one of the fundamental elements that make labour under capitalist production unique is the role of private property. First, the means of production under capitalism are no longer owned by the workers that are doing the actual labour. While this is true of all class societies, capitalism concretizes the role of the capitalist and the worker to a degree that has not existed in previous societies. To this point, there are two aspects that have been privatized that have not been before: Labour Power[3] and the Means of Production. The means of production under capitalism are controlled by the capitalist class who use them, along with labour power that is also bought and sold on the market as private property, to create commodities which they then sell on the market for a higher value than the value of the labour power it took to produce them. This gain that the capitalist derives is labelled as surplus value and the aim of the capitalist class is to extract as much surplus value as possible from both the labour power and the means of production that are now the private property of the capitalist. The ownership of the means of

[3] Labour power describes the capacity to do work. Marx is careful to distinguish between the capacity to do work and the actual work being done (labour). This distinction is crucial because it is the *capacity* of the worker to do work that the capitalist is buying on the market as opposed to the labourer herself (Marx, 1977)

production in hands other than those who are doing the work makes for work that is disconnected from the producers and removes the potential for production to be a creator of meaning and fulfilment in one's life. The second important outcome with respect to the alienation that results from private property is that the product that is created belongs to someone apart from the actual producers. This creates a situation where the products that are created are no longer connected to the producers, but are simply created in order to earn an income so that the producer can return to the market to buy the goods necessary for their reproduction. The way this manifests itself will be analyzed further in the following section.

Alienation, although more rigidly defined earlier, can be simplified to a term that describes the disjuncture between the state of people as they currently exist and their potential. Hegel's notion of truth can be used to clarify. While the human nature that currently exists is the actual manifestation of the social and production relations that exist within capitalism, it falls short of the true human nature that can exist given our current levels of wealth and technology. This leaves capitalism as both a positive and negative force in the molding of human nature. In the positive sense, it created conditions that allow for human nature to grow and develop in ways that were impossible before the transition to capitalism. It has however simultaneously pushed the limits of what it is capable of fostering and nurturing within this economic system. Human nature has grown to a level where capitalism is no longer capable of meeting human aspirations. Capitalism is also unable to foster any further development without major reform that would necessitate a break with some of the foundational tenets of capitalist production that were laid out earlier. This section will lay bare some of the ways in which capitalism is currently inhibiting human nature and not allowing it to grow to its true potential given the nature of society today. It will begin by noting how capitalist production has alienated humans from production (both in the activity itself and the product that is created). Here the concept of alienated labour will be explored and the product that comes from this type of labour will also be analyzed to show how humans

under capitalism are producing under compulsions that inhibit their ability to develop their human nature. Next the alienation that exists in our social relations will be analyzed. For this section, the social relations that exist under the ethos of capital will be explored and this will expose how destructive capitalism is on social relations. In this section, first human alienation from other humans will be studied and then the alienation of humans from the species in general will be touched on. Finally, the last section will briefly introduce some of the ways that capitalist production has been detrimental to human relations to nature. Here some of the value relations that exist within capitalism will be explored to expose the ways in which this has created a framework where nature is seen as something external to us that we must conquer in order to thrive.

3.2.1 Human alienation from production

As noted in the section on human nature, production and the processes associated with it are central tenets of who we are as a species. Capitalism, in its essence, alienated humans from their production relations. The labour that is done within the capitalist mode of production is referred to by Marx as alienated labour. Ollman (1976) describes this process succinctly when he notes that "instead of developing the potential inherent in man's powers, capitalist labour consumes these powers without replenishing them, burns them up as if they were a fuel, and leaves the individual worker that much poorer" (138). This type of labour is extremely detrimental to both the mental and physical well-being of humans. Physically it exhausts humans and leaves them in a decrepit state of being. Marx outlines some of the negative physical effects of capitalist labour in *Capital* (Marx, 1977, pp. 340–417, 636–642). While many of the most egregious of these violations are no longer prevalent in advanced capitalist societies, capitalist labour still tends to be detrimental to the wellbeing of human physical health. In addition to this, many of the devastating impacts of capitalist labour on human bodies is simply shifted to the Global South and therefore have not been addressed, but simply relocated. In addition to the physical effects, capitalist production also wreaks havoc on the mental health of those who are forced to work

under the logic of capital. This can be seen by the increasing instances of mental health issues in advanced societies. Here Ollman (1976) notes that "the worker's subjective feelings of 'being at home when he is not working' and 'not at home' when he is working" is an important aspect of the creation of the void that exists for workers who are forced to sell their labour on the market in order to survive (140). This touches on the relationship between private property and alienated labour that was mentioned earlier. It is important to note that a concept like alienated labour is a comparative concept. It is only useful in comparing alienated labour to labour that is not alienated. This labour exists within communism according to Marx. Ollman (1976) sums up alienated labour noting that "the relations of capitalist productive activity to man's species self, to his body and mind, to his subjective feelings when doing labour, to his will to engage in capitalist labour, to the capitalist, to his own human and animal functions and to what productive activity will be like under communism equal alienated labour" (141).

The next aspect of alienation with production is the alienation that exists between labour and the goods that are produced. Ollman (1976) notes three particular characteristics about the product that alienate the producer from it: i. the product is created from alienated labour, ii. The product is not necessary for the reproduction of the worker, and iii. the worker is subservient to what is lost in the process of production (143). In the first instance, the centrality of production within human nature leads to humans essentially putting themselves into the objects that we create. When these objects are created under the condition of alienated labour, the product that is created is, inherently, alienated from the humans that produced it. The next way in which the product that is created is alienated from the worker is that the product typically is not necessary for the reproduction of the worker. The work that is done in capitalism is not an end in itself and therefore the production process is not done with the intended outcome of sustaining the worker's livelihood directly, but is instead done to earn an income that is then used to reproduce the worker. This extra step makes work not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. This separation creates a workforce that has no inherent interest in the goods that are produced

and therefore creates products that are alienated from the producer. Finally, the goods that are produced under capitalist production are alienated from the worker because of the way that goods are enriched through production at the expense of labour. The value system created within capitalism (which will be addressed in further detail in the section on nature) creates a production process in which the goal is solely the transfer (and creation) of value. In this process the creation of surplus value is the only aim and therefore this comes at the cost of the workers who are producing the commodities that are to be sold on the market. This process creates a workforce that, instead of having a positive relationship with the goods that are produced, has a negative one. This robbing of value from workers creates goods that are alienated from the workers that produce them.

3.2.2 Human alienation from fellow humans

Another fundamental aspect of human nature is that it is inherently social. Humans do not exist as individual entities that are isolated from each other, but instead as beings that depend on others not only to survive, but also to thrive. The first way that capitalism alienates humans from each other is in the class structure that is fundamental to capitalist production. Capitalism cannot exist without the creation of two classes that have antagonistic social relations. The one class is the capitalist class that owns the means of production and therefore has significant power and control over society. The second class is the working class that is, according to Marx, “free in the double sense, that as a free man he can dispose of his labour-power as his own commodity, and that on the other hand he has no other commodity for sale (Marx, 1977, p. 274). In production, these two classes have antagonistic objectives: the capitalist class aims to maximize surplus value while the working class aims to try to increase wages. This antagonistic relationship creates a gulf between the capitalist and the workers that pit one against the other. In addition to this class struggle that exists, capitalist production also acts to pit the working class against itself. The way that labour is bought and sold on the market like a commodity, in conjunction with the existence of unemployment and underemployment (creating a “reserve army of

labour" (Marx, 1977, pp. 762–854)), puts a downward pressure on the price of labour. This downward pressure serves the capitalist class by pitting workers against each other in their search for employment. The existence of the reserve army of labour gives the capitalist class power to constantly lower wages because there are people who are desperate for a job who are willing to sell their labour power for less than it costs to reproduce it. This gives truth to the words of Joan Robinson (1962) when she so poignantly notes that "The misery of being exploited by capitalists is nothing compared to the misery of not being exploited at all" (45). This pitting of workers against each other creates a tension between workers and causes a rift between people who otherwise have a common interest. The bringing in of strikebreaking workers is an example of this antagonism that is extremely detrimental to the relationship that people in a similar social sphere would otherwise have with one another.

The second way in which capitalist production alienates humans from each other is in the way that it alienates us from our potential as a species. Ollman (1976) notes that when "Marx claims that 'estranged human labour estranges the species from man', he is saying that the unique configuration of relations which distinguishes the individual as a human being has been transformed into something quite different by the performance of capitalist labour" (151). He goes on to note that this form of alienation is considered from the viewpoint of the individual. He quotes Marx, who views this alienation from the perspective of an individual who is a member of the species. Marx says that "In tearing away from man the object of his production … estranged labour tears from him his species life, his real species objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into a disadvantage that his organic body, nature, is taken from him" (seen in Ollman, 1976, p. 151). The case in point is that the advantage that humans have over other animals is the human capacity to create things that are beyond the realm of basic survival, to create things for the sole purpose of beauty or pleasure. This advantage that humans have over other animals is turned on itself and becomes a disadvantage when "natural objects to which he is related become the property of other men" (Ollman, 1976, p. 152). Because of the existence of private

property, humans are restricted in what can be used to satisfy our needs and this limitation prevents us from being able to use the objects we desire, or require, to satisfy our wants and needs. Another uniquely human advantage that is turned into a disadvantage is our consciousness. Our consciousness allows us to be aware of what we are doing and also to plan our activities. Our consciousness allows for a task to be done for reasons beyond either immediate gratification or survival as is the case with the vast majority of tasks done by other animals. This allows for tasks to have a purpose that goes beyond base drives and desires, therefore giving a sense of purpose to the actions themselves and not just the end results. With alienated labour, this sense of satisfaction is taken away from us. When labour becomes only a means to an end and not an end in itself, that deeper sense of satisfaction that can be gained from producing is taken away. Thus this type of production constrains us from reaching our potential as human beings and limits the amount of growth and satisfaction that can be gained from productive activity.

3.2.3 Human alienation from nature

Human alienation from other humans is very closely connected to the alienation that occurs to non-human nature. Ollman (1976) notes that “every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself” (148). When addressing the alienation of humans from nature it is important to define what “nature” or “the environment” actually is. Here Vogel (1988) does a comprehensive job of outlining the sociality of the environment when he notes that

> the "environment" from which we are alienated is a social environment, and that our alienation derives from our failure to recognize its sociality. To say that our environment is social is not merely to say that social forces and institutions - the market, the political system, gender roles, etc - are as "real" to us as the physical objects that surround us; it is to point out that even those

> physical objects themselves are always already the result of social labour. Just as we are alienated from the social institutions around us when they come to appear not as the product of human action but rather like forces of nature - i.e., independently given and unalterable facts entirely outside of our control - so too we are alienated from the objects around us when they appear to us not as the result of social labour but rather as mere "commodities" entering into mysterious relations with each other on the basis of a seemingly natural price (375-376).

This view is contrasted to a perspective that sees the environment as external to us, one that views the “environment” and “humans” as mutually exclusive. This view posits and dictates that the rift created between humans and the environment can be bridged by admitting to the externality of nature, submitting to its power over us, and agreeing to live under this external “natures”. This view of the environment, Vogel notes, is mistaken in several ways. First, it sees the actions of humans as “unnatural”. This view sees the human interventions that take place on the environment as encroachments on nature and therefore creates a dichotomy between the “natural” actions of non-human nature and the actions of human beings. The second area in this school of thought that is mistaken is in its notion of “pure” nature. This school of thought believes that only nature that is not impacted by human activity is natural. This creates a notion of true “wilderness” that consists of a piece of nature that has been “withdrawn from the natural order in which human transformative activity plays a crucial part” (377). He sums up his critique by noting that “ultimately the word "environment" is not ambiguous: we live in a single environment, not two, and it is a natural one - and so is increasingly becoming a human one as well” (376-377). The view that Vogel recommends instead recognizes our connectedness to the environment and therefore recognizes its sociality. This view puts forth a dialectical relationship between nature and humans: humans are active participants in nature while at the same time nature is an active participant and very influential in shaping us as a species. He ends his piece by noting that the two central terms to his conception of alienation are “humanization” and

"recognition". He goes on to state the "alienation occurs not when we humanize nature but when we fail to recognize that that is what we are doing: when our act becomes an alien power over and against us" (381).

This form of alienation is extremely detrimental to human growth and progress. In the shorter term, this rift doesn't allow for some of the individual and societal gains that can be garnered from a respect of nature. In the longer term, there is a possible link that could be drawn between environmental crises and the current condition of the relationship between humans and nature. Moore (2000) notes some of the way this connection plays out and traces the roots of the crisis to the origins of capitalism. He notes that "by locating the origins of modern ecological degradation in the 16th century, I suggest that the ecological contradictions of the present are not essentially rooted in industrialization or corporate depredation but are found rather in the logic of capital itself" (146). This touches on some of the topics covered earlier in the paper, in its attempt to trace the roots of these alienations not to the particular manifestation that is currently occurring, but rather to the logic and internal relations that result from the logic of capital.

4.0 Conclusion

Capitalism as a mode of production is inherently alienating. As was shown, from its roots, the fundamental building blocks upon which the capitalist mode of production rests limit the potential of human nature. This paper showed that from its inception, the foundations upon which capitalism is built, i.e. private property and the capitalist state are inherently alienating. This paper then went on to show that human nature is dynamic and is strongly influenced by the society in which one lives. Capitalism influences the character of the human species. As was shown earlier, capitalist production has produced an unprecedented level of wealth and technology in society that has increased the capacities of human development greatly. Unfortunately, there are also aspects within capitalism and its foundational tenets that do not allow for this potential to be actually realized. This gap between the current state of human nature and its potential is the alienation that capitalism cannot alleviate. This paper also showed various ways in which the capitalist mode of production inhibits the relationship we have with ourselves, our fellow humans, our work, and the environment. All these aspects bring to light some of the contradictions that exist within the capitalist mode of production. They introduce the reader to the ways in which capitalism actually inhibits the potential that currently exists and tries to show that this potential cannot be alleviated under the framework of a capitalist mode of production.

For further research, the connection that this alienation has with climate change could bring this theoretical framework to practical use. This can be studied to see whether the climate crisis that currently exists can be bridged by reforming capitalism in some way, or whether the system needs to be abolished and replaced with a more just economic order to solve the problem. This framework can also be used in attempts to trace the roots of other social, political, economic, and environmental injustices. With the laying out of the capitalist mode of production as something qualitatively distinct from other modes of organizing society, the roots of injustices as they currently exist can be traced to the logic that is inherent in capital.

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